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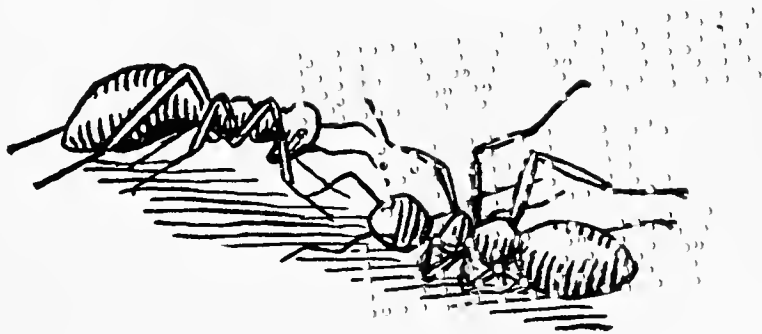
THE ADVENTURES OF TWO ANTS

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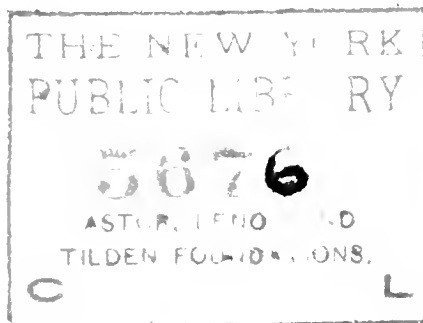
TOLD BY NANNY HAMMARSTRÖM

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH

By A. E. B. FRIES

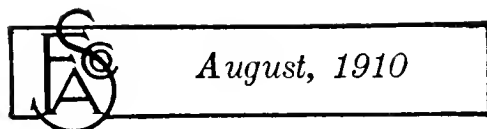


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CHAPTER I

RUFA'S CHILDHOOD

ONCE, I lived in a little tiny egg; but now I am an ant and quite old.

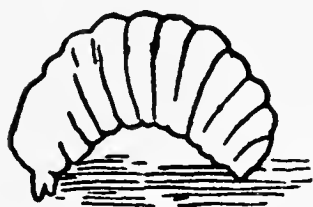
Last summer I crawled over Gunnie's leg and Biggie took me up and set me carefully in the sand. From that time I know you, and I want to tell you something about the ant country.

Yes, I once lay in a little egg. Perhaps Biggie and Gunnie have also lived in little eggs, that I don't know; but I once lay in an egg in mamma's and my friend's house in a nice hole in the ground, and my nurse licked me all day long. That was what I liked, and I puffed and swelled and grew, and I wanted very much to get out. Then my shell burst and out I came. Do you want to know what I looked like?

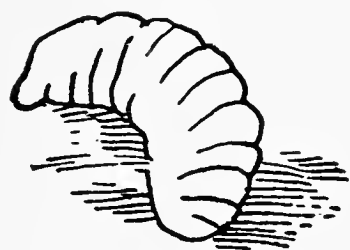


Well, I had no feet and no eyes, and I was white, and I was soft, and I looked like a worm, and some one came

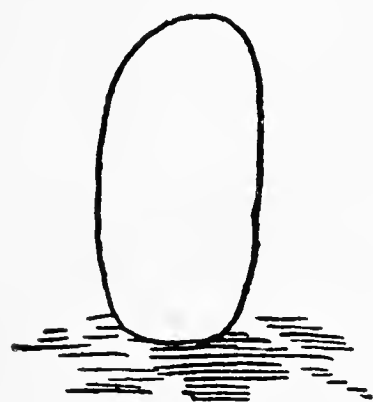
and gave me sweet, good milk to drink. Since then I have seen many such little ant babies, and I have fed them and sung for them, and I think them very dear; but I have no children of my own.



While I lay there, sipping and drinking my sweet milk, something strange happened again. A long thread began to grow and grow from my mouth, and I tangled myself all up in it; and no matter how I turned and twisted and rolled and fussed, the thing only grew longer and longer, until at



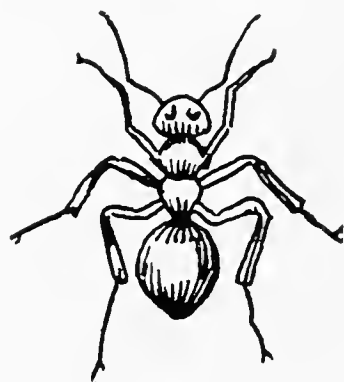
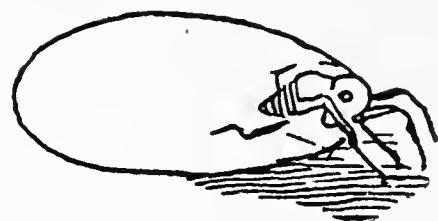
last I was like a spool of thread. I became frightened and hot, so that I began to perspire in big drops all over me, but that made it still worse for now the threads stuck to me, and I lay as in prison, wrapped and bound. When I was too tired to bother any more, I fell asleep. Thus I lay there sleeping and sleeping.



And, will you believe it? just so do all ant babies wind themselves in, and we call this thread-ball, pupa. The pupæ look like little white bags or barrels. Perhaps Biggie and Gunnie have seen them in the ant-hill.

One fine day I awoke once more and I had then slept myself so strong, that I kicked off my threads and bands, and crept out of the pupa. I know now that my nurse helped me out.

When I came out, I was at first quite frightened, it was so light and strange around me. You see, I had got eyes while I slept, but I did not understand that yet, and when I was going to turn my fat, round body, why, it was no longer round and fat. Long threads hung on both sides, and I was very, very slender around my waist; and I was not white, neither was I soft. Also I had two long threads in front, and there was a funny tickling in them when they touched anything. Do you know, I felt so afraid that I lay quite still and thought,—“what in the world, what in the world shall I do now, and what will happen to all my threads?” After a little while, I felt a shell growing around my stomach and around my chest and head, and small, close fitting covers for my threads. And all the time I grew harder and browner, and nobody came as before to lick me.



“What shall I do, what shall I do?” thought I. Then a brown and thin and thready somebody came toward me, and felt all over my head with her mouth-threads, and then I recognized my own old nurse whom I had never seen with my eyes before.



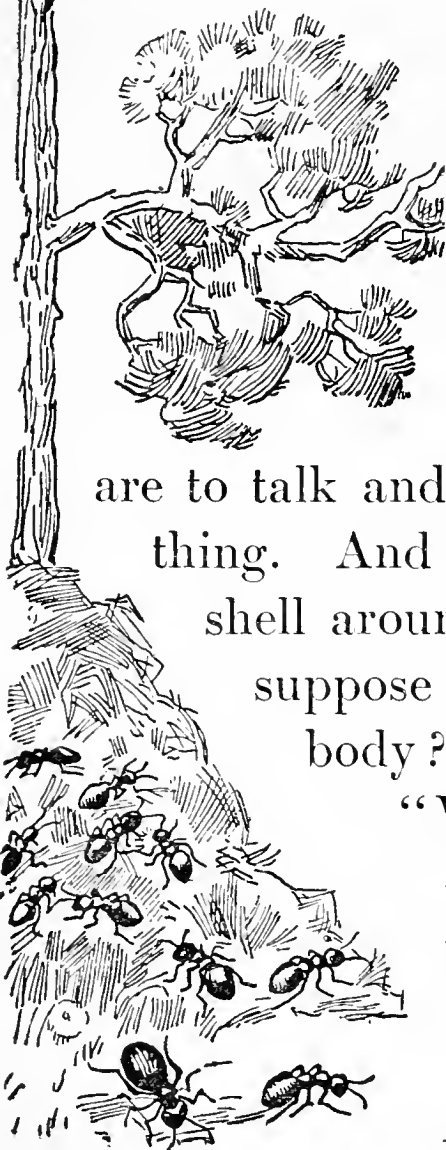
“You see now you are just like me,” she said, “just like me.” And then I saw that I was.

“Now run, now run a little with your threads, they are legs,” she said and laughed. “Don’t be afraid of them; do like this,” she said, and swung her threads.

I then tried to move my front threads, and I was very happy when I succeeded. I put them down



on the floor, thinking to walk on them, but I tumbled over instead. At this the thin one laughed so that her threads shook.



“You are somewhat stupid, little one; somewhat stupid,” she said. “Why, you have eight threads! Six for legs, think; six legs! Walk on them, and let your two front threads alone. With your front threads, you are to talk and feel and smell, you foolish little ant thing. And is it not pretty nice now to have a shell around stomach and chest? How do you suppose such jerks would feel to a soft body?”

“Won’t you please help me?” I begged, —“I am afraid I don’t at all know what to do with all my legs and threads.”

“Oh, yes,” said the thin one, “but, you understand, you must learn to

help yourself, and also others when you grow older; but I will gladly show you all I know."

And, Biggie and Gunnie, you can't imagine what fun I had when I began to run around on my six splendid legs. I should so much like to take you with me, and show you our house if you were not so dreadfully big. In one house there are more than a hundred rooms, and stairways and halls and caverns and hiding places. There are warm rooms for cold days, and cool rooms for hot days. There are light towers and dark cellars. You don't know how nice it is.

I ran about everywhere, up and down through the halls, in and out of the rooms. I wanted to see everything. I wanted to learn to know all. Sometimes I would be rushing so fast that I knocked against other ants in the house. They went about everywhere, working everywhere. When I stumbled into them they were cross.

"How you do run, you poor wretch of an ant!" they said. "Have you no eyes? Have you not two fine, big eyes, one on each side of your head, and three little pearl-eyes besides in the middle of your forehead? And have you not mouth-threads?" And they stopped and sniffed me.

"You smell like a good friend," they said, "but you are in too much of a flurry; better look out so that nothing goes wrong with you."

I sniffed them too, and they all had the same good

smell as the thin one and myself, and they looked just like us.

One day, the thin one, whom I had begun to call Fredrika Formica, came up to me. She looked very serious.

“Dear Fredrika Formica,” I said, “you must look happy, for that is what I like.”

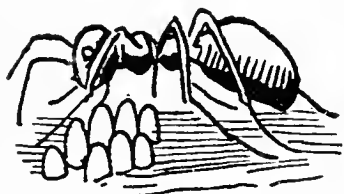


“Indeed, but do you know what I don’t like?”

“No, what?” I asked.

“Well, I don’t at all like to hear all the ants say: ‘Rufa is a good-for-nothing; Rufa is lazy and stupid; Rufa only runs in the road and is of no use.’ So you see, Rufa, you will have to learn to work. Now come with me!”

With this Fredrika Formica took me—for I was the one called Rufa—with her to a little bit of a room, where there were tiny white eggs.



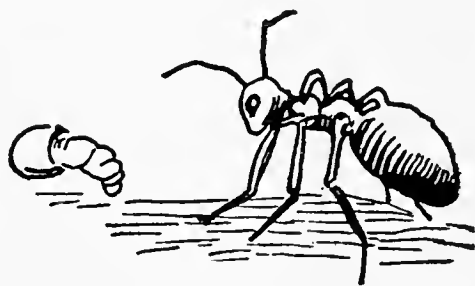
“Now, you must keep licking these,” she said, “and take good care of them,” and she commenced to show me how to do it. At first, I thought it rather tiresome, but soon I noticed how the eggs began to swell and grow larger, and then I became curious and wondered,—“What is going to happen now?”

And do you know what happened? Why, finally the shell burst and out came a funny little soft, white baby,

which I felt so sorry for, because it could not run, nor see, nor talk as I could.

“Fredrika Formica! Fredrika Formica!” I cried, “what shall I do, what in the world shall I do with this thing?”

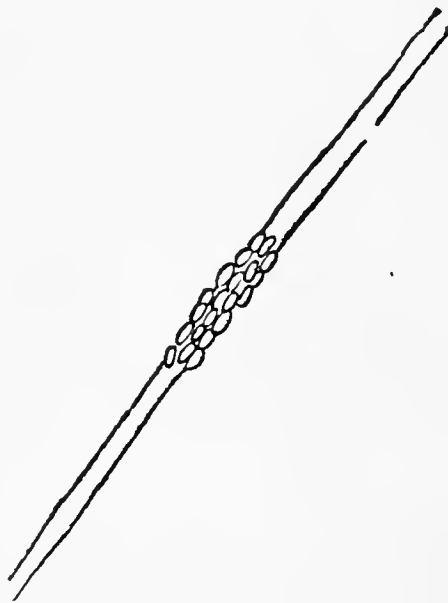
“Calm yourself, dear Rufa, calm yourself, you are always so excited. There is nothing the matter. It is all right, just as it should be;” and Fredrika Formica came over to my little baby and licked it and gave it something with her tongue, and the fat, white little thing immediately sucked up what it got, very nicely.



“This is what you must learn also,” said Fredrika Formica. “Lick the baby and keep it nice and clean, and feed it so that it may grow round and fat. If you take good care of it, I will show you something lovely some day.”

“But dear Fredrika Formica,” I said, “I have nothing on my tongue that the little white one would like.”

“Have you not? Well, come with me then!” And off we went through many halls and many rooms until we came to a room where what seemed like ropes, were strung from side to side.



“Now come here to these roots,” Fredrika Formica said, “and watch what I do.”

She went over to what I had thought were ropes. On them were a great many round, green balls and over these Fredrika Formica passed her mouth-threads.

“What are those?” I asked.

“Why, these are our cows, dear Rufa. We get our honey-milk from them. Come here and taste.”

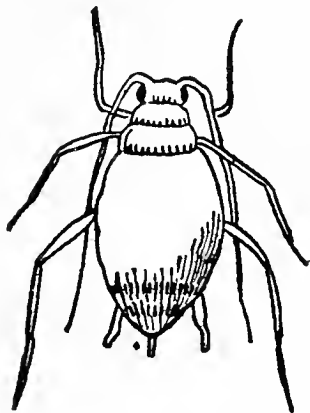
“But what are you doing now, Fredrika Formica?”

“I am milking them, come over here.”

When I came up to her, I saw that on the back of the little green cow lay a glowing drop, and when I put my tongue to it, it tasted so sweet and good that I only wanted more.



“Wait and you will get some,” said Fredrika Formica, and she began to stroke and pet another little cow close by. It had the funniest little taps on its back. Very soon there trickled out a drop of honey, which I quickly sucked up.

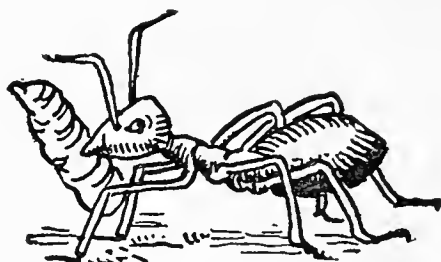


“How good it is, and how kind you are, Fredrika Formica!” I said, and waved my mouth-threads to her.

“That’s all right,” she said and waved back, “But now you must milk and fill the maw to take to the little ones, who cannot come here themselves.”

“In the maw,” I said, “maw, what is that and where is it?”

Then Fredrika Formica laughed and said, “I always forget how little you know as yet. There you see what happens when one only wants to run and play. The maw is your own lunch basket and milk bottle which you carry within your own shell. You suck up the honey-milk with your tongue, put it into the maw and carry it to the little white babies. Then you take it out with your tongue and give it to them to eat.”



I know now, that you Biggie and you Gunnie, have no such handy maws, and so you have to carry your food in baskets and bottles. But Fredrika Formica and I filled our maws with honey-milk and carried it to the babies. When we had fed them, Fredrika Formica said:

“Now you must do one thing more before you may run and play. Take one baby prettily in your arms and carry him up to a tower-room. I notice that the sun is shining so warm and nice, and that is what the little ones like.”



So we carried them, one after the other, upstairs, and it was just lovely up there. Of course I did not know what Fredrika Formica meant by the sun, but I did not want to be always asking, so I thought I would find out for

myself. I saw nothing in the tower that could have been the sun, but very nice and light it was up there.

“Now we’ll trim up,” said Fredrika Formica, “and then you may wander into adventures all you wish.”



Then she stood up on two legs and began to clean herself with the other four, first the legs, then the stomach, and then the chest. After that she put down two legs, bent down her head, and began to clean it with all her might. She turned and twisted a thousand ways and combed and smoothed and rubbed and filed until she was so fine and glossy that she shone and glistened.

“Now, you do the same,” she said.

But do you suppose I could? No, time and again I fell over, and I could not twist and turn so lightly and gracefully as Fredrika Formica.

“All our beginning is difficult, but year after year makes it easier,” said she, laughing.

CHAPTER II

THE ANT-LION

THUS many days passed in the same way. I nursed babies and assisted Fredrika Formica. The babies became pupæ and out of the pupæ came ants, who were like Fredrika Formica and myself. Sometimes I thought of that “lovely thing” which Fredrika Formica had promised me, and of the sun of which she had spoken, but I knew that when Fredrika Formica had promised anything, I would get it without begging, and so I waited.

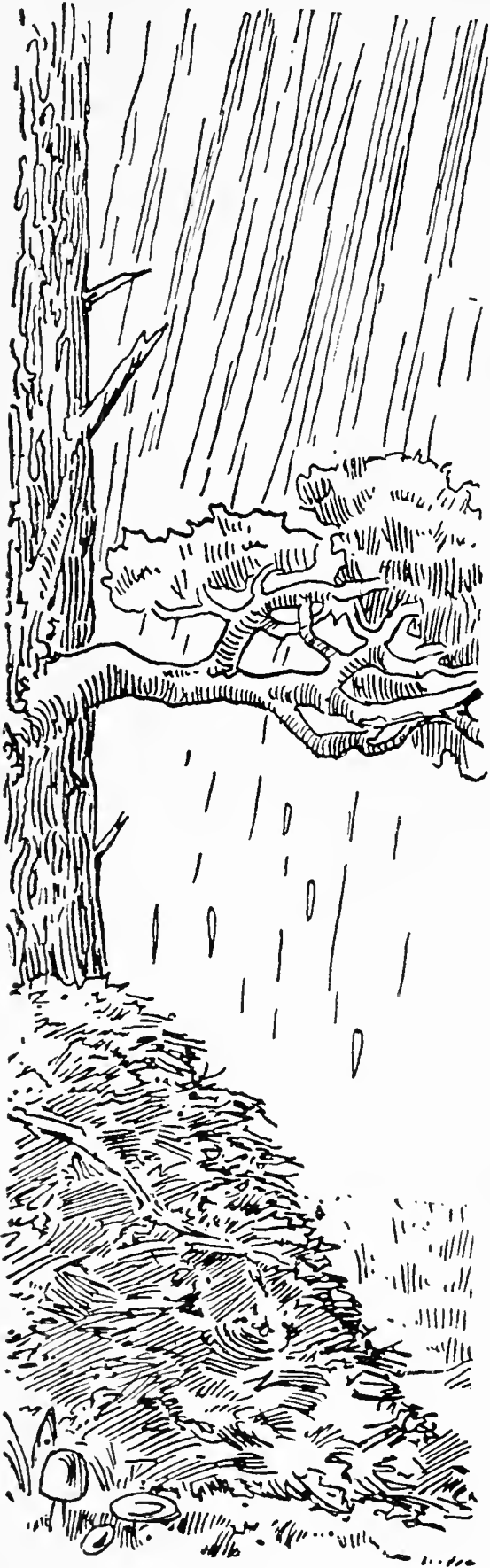


At last a day came when she said:

“Now, Rufa, the sun is shining beautifully. You and I will go together on an excursion. Run ahead to the cows and milk your maw full in case we should be away for a long time, and then tidy yourself with your leg combs and we will start.

So we set off; but not down to the basement nor into the holes and passages, but first up into the tower and then to the roof of the house. It was so light there, that I had to bend and bow my head to keep it from stinging my five eyes.





“If you can see now,” said Fredrika Formica, “just follow me! We are now walking down from the roof and away from the house and into the woods.”

Fredrika Formica walked ahead, and I followed her. At first I was so surprised by it all, that I kept quite silent, but at last I had to ask about something I had wondered a long time.

“Where is the sun, Fredrika Formica?”

“The sun? It is up there between the tree tops. Do you see how it stretches long bridges down to us, so that heat and light fly down here on them?”

“But where is the sun at night?”

“I suppose it creeps into the earth to sleep, just as we do,” Fredrika Formica answered; “but I don’t know for sure about all that, Rufa. All I

know is that the old ants say that it is our sun and that it is for us it shines."

"Well, whose are the trees then?" I asked.

"I guess they are ours as well. They have grown here so that the sun shall not become too hot for us; that is what I have learned," Fredrika Formica said.

"Sometimes the sun wraps itself in a mantle; then we can't see it at all, but we know it is weeping, because big drops begin to fall on the trees and on the ground and everywhere. The trees are very good for us to have then, too, because they hold their branches over our house so that the tears cannot run into our rooms."

"But why does the sun weep?"

"I don't know; perhaps somebody has been wicked and foolish."

"Do you think we are foolish?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Rufa, I don't know just how that is, but any way I believe the sun likes us. Now let us go on."

And we went, but I could not help thinking about the sun, our sun, who laughed until it grew hot, and wept when some one was naughty, so that the tears dropped on everything.

"Fredrika Formica," I said,—

"Yes, Rufa," she answered,—

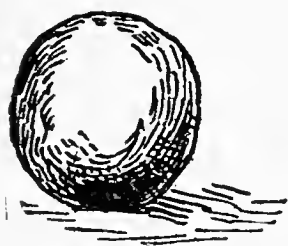
"I don't want the sun to wee"—

But in that moment Fredrika Formica gave me a jerk and pulled me to the other side of the road.



“Come away! Rufa, come away! Come here! Come here! There is a lion, an ant-lion, he threw sand on you to catch you.” And we hurried away quickly.

“Dear Rufa,” Fredrika Formica said, when we were well out of danger and peacefully settled down in safety behind a great rock—almost as large as Gunnie’s fist—“it might have gone very badly for you. I have entirely forgotten to warn you against the ant-lion; how could I be so thoughtless!” Fredrika Formica’s mouth-threads trembled, and she kept stroking and feeling me all over with them repeatedly, so frightened was she at the thought that I might have fallen in the lion’s den.



“Fredrika Formica, you are the kindest ant I know,” I said, and waved my mouth-threads to her.

“All right, all right, dear Rufa,” she said, “but now you must pay attention to what I tell you, and learn to



recognize our dangerous enemy, the ant-lion. You must know that he steals into our paths, and then he digs a big hole in the sand, and places himself in the bottom of the hole, so that we cannot see him. There he lies in wait for ants who go by and fall into the pit, just as you came near doing, Rufa.”

“What would have happened if I had fallen in the hole?” I asked.

“Oh, Rufa, then the lion would have grabbed you with the two long, sharp sabers he has for teeth, and then I should never have seen you again.”

“That ant-lion is horrid and wicked,” I said.

“Yes, indeed he is,” said Fredrika Formica, “he is a very dreadful animal.”

“Perhaps it is because of him that the sun weeps,” I said.

“Yes, perhaps so, but that I don’t know,” Fredrika Formica answered, “but now you must come and look at the lion’s pit so that you will be on your guard another time.”

And Fredrika Formica and I climbed up on the rock to be able to see it better.

“We don’t dare to go near,” Fredrika Formica said, “for if we do the lion will throw sand on us to make us fall down in the pit. Just as she had said this, I saw a whole cloud of sand rise from the pit and hit a poor ant that was going by. All the sand flew over it and it tumbled down.

“Come and help, come and help,” I cried and ran as fast as my six legs could carry me. But I had not got far



before Fredrika Formica caught up with me, threw me over, and stood on top of me. I only saw her teeth which were ready to bite me.

“Fredrika Formica,” I cried, but I did not dare to move, “what are you thinking of?”

“I am thinking that one must not purposely go and throw one’s self into the teeth of the lion,” Fredrika Formica said, and looked very serious.

“But the other ant, the one who fell?”

“No one can help her any more,” said Fredrika Formica, looking gentle and kind once more; “but get up now, poor little Rufa; perhaps we had better go home now from our first excursion.”

And so we did, but I had much to think of for some time,—of the sun who laughed and wept, of the ant-lion, and the poor little ant whom none could help any more.

CHAPTER III

HARD WORK

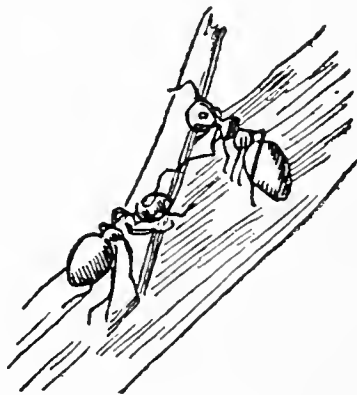
IN the ant-hill there was such a hurry, such a scurry! All the ants worked both night and day. Fredrika Formica now had hardly any time to chat with me, and when she did speak this is how it sounded:

“Lick eggs and milk cows, Rufa! Drag home logs, Rufa! We need more rooms. Look on and learn to build passages and put up walls and roofs. We need many rooms, many passages and a larger hill. Something is going to happen here. Something wonderful is going to happen.”

This made me very curious and I rushed after her and cried,—

“Tell me, tell me, Fredrika Formica!”

“I have no time! I have no time! You will see later,” she said, and with that I had to be content. And it was very strange, that although I did not at all know why there was such a great hurry, yet I too worked all I could. I dragged large logs to the stack, such as had fallen down from the pines, and I gave them to the clever carpenter ants, who built them together into walls and floors and



ceilings in new rooms. Once I began to build a little room myself, but the walls were very crooked, and a wise old ant came and pulled it all down, and built it over again. So I understood that it would be better for me



to busy myself with what I really could do. Sometimes, I would run out in the woods and climb high pillars and ribbons that rose up out of the ground, and on them I found wild cows herding. These I lured and caught and brought them home to our cow-stables. Sometimes I had to fetch honeydew to the old workers who were so busy that they had not time to go and eat.

But, in the midst of our greatest hurry, a dreadful accident happened. I was standing with Fredrika Formica feeding the fat, jolly little babies when we heard a bang and a crash, and saw the walls begin to totter and fall. Logs, stones, sticks and straws, everything tumbled pell-mell. Ants and pupæ and babies tumbled over each other and I thought the whole world would perish.

“Fredrika Formica, Fredrika Formica,” was all I could whisper.

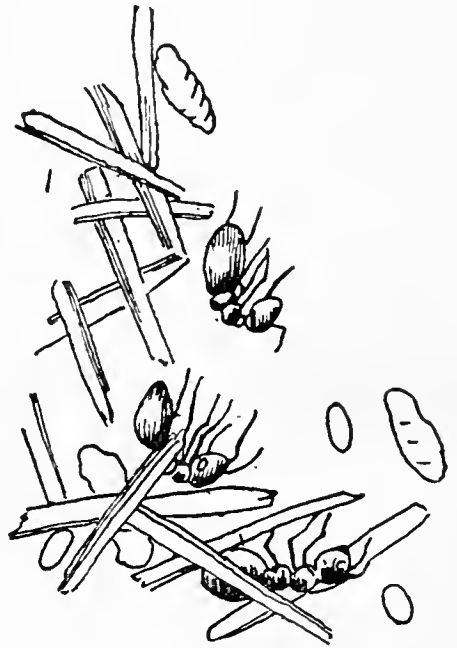
“There, there, Rufa,” she said, “it won’t do to be fright-

ened and weep and complain, only make haste so that we can help as many as possible."

With this Fredrika Formica rushed off into the midst of the worst collapse, and began to rescue ants who lay there caught, unable to get out. I did not want to lag behind and so I ran after her. The worst was already past. Only one other log rolled down, but that was not so dangerous. One can well stand some blows and knocks, when one has such a fine armor shell as we have. Soon there were hundreds of ants working at the place of accident. The poor, wounded ants we carried on our backs to the safe rooms, and at once other ants came to take care of them, and licked their wounds.

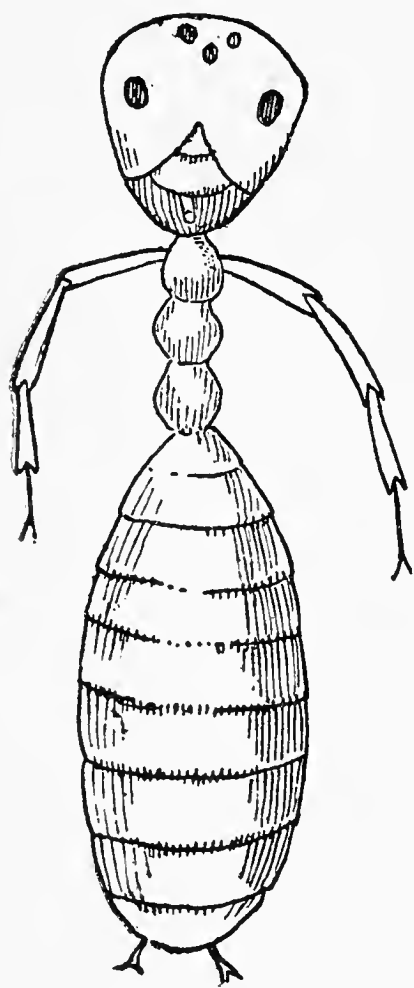
You must know, Biggie and Gunnie, that is our medicine. We also brought down pupæ and larvæ, but these we carried in our mouths between our strong teeth. We think this a very handy way. Perhaps Biggie and Gunnie, too, carry little baby larvæ about between their teeth?

We began to drag away the logs at once, and some ants started immediately to build new rooms and new hallways and passages. But many, many days' work had



been destroyed and many poor ants were sick. Many had lost legs and mouth-threads, and many babies and pupæ had been lost altogether. I was so unhappy over it all, and I did not understand how such a terrible calamity could have happened; and so one day, when Fredrika Formica had a little time to spare me, I asked her about it.

“Well,” she said, “I don’t really know either, dear Rufa, how it can happen, but this is how we believe it is.



There is a great, giant being called man. I am not sure what he looks like, but I think if an ant should stand up and walk on her hind legs all the time, and also be as tall as many hundred ants together, she might look like a man. Men have no mouth-threads, and so I don’t suppose they can talk with each other, at least not as well as we can. Besides their two hind legs, they have also two short fore legs, which do not reach down to the ground. With them they may be able to speak a little, we believe, and with them they do a great deal of harm to us. Some of them have hardly any hind legs at all, only fore legs and a big long body. It is strange how they can walk at all.”

“But what have men to do with our accident?” I asked.

“Why Rufa, do you know, some of them are even more wicked than the ant-lion, and now we think that one of them with a great big log which he holds in one of his fore legs, poked into our stack and caused the whole accident.”

“Do they eat us as the ant-lion does?” I asked.

“No, they do not, none can say that they do, but, you see, that is the most shameful part of it. The ant-lion is hungry, just as you and I are, and if it gets nothing to eat it will die, and therefore it traps us. Of course, I don’t like the ant-lion, but it is far better than man. He is the stupidest and wickedest of all.”

“Yes, I think so too,” I said, “and when I get a chance, I will bite him and squirt ant poison into him so that it will smart sharply. Fredrika Formica, when I think of all our poor, sick ants and lost children, I just feel like biting and biting all nasty men.”

“Yes, Rufa, if I thought that human beings would learn anything by that, I would gladly help you,” Fredrika Formica said, and she looked very sad and troubled as she spoke.

“But listen, Fredrika Formica, now I know why the sun weeps; it is not for the ant-lion’s sake, he is not worse than many others. No, it is because of the wicked men. That is what I think, anyway.”

Fredrika Formica, however, answered nothing at all, but went back to her work and I did the same.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROYAL CHILDREN

A FEW days later Fredrika Formica came to me; “Come quickly, Rufa, and help me get the youngest children out of their pupæ. Now you will see the wonderful thing which I have told you would happen. But this is only the beginning.”

She ran ahead and I followed fast and curious. Around the youngest children were a great many nurses such as Fredrika Formica and myself, and we began immediately to bite holes on the pupa bags to allow the children to come out. I had taken part in such performances many times already, and I could not understand why Fredrika Formica said that it would be something so wonderful, but you can't imagine, Biggie and Gunnie, how astonished I was when my baby crept out of his shell. I screamed just the same way that I did when I first saw an ant baby.

“Fredrika Formica, Fredrika Formica, what shall I do, what in the world shall I do with this one? There's something wrong, there's something wrong, it can't belong to us!”

Fredrika Formica laughed so that she nearly fell over, pupa and all.

“How funny and excited you are, Rufa,” she said. “What is wrong with your child? Mine is just as he should be,” and in that moment she helped her baby out of the shell. She knew quite well why I was so amazed, but she liked to joke with me.

“Fredrika Formica,” I said, “come here and see if there is not something strange about my baby.”

“No,” Fredrika Formica said, “it has six legs, has it not? and two big eyes and three small ones.”

“But do look carefully,” I begged.

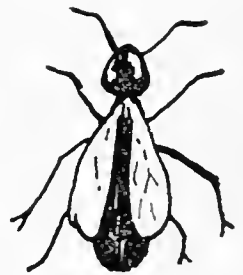
“I am looking, I am looking, two mouth-threads it has, and head and teeth and chest and hind body.”

“But don’t you see those things there;” I said, almost in despair, “don’t you see those rags there, hanging on its breast?”

But now, not only Fredrika Formica laughed, but all the other nurses as well, which made me feel quite embarrassed, for I did not like them all to laugh at me.

“Why it is nothing, Rufa, it is nothing, though we laugh a little at you,” Fredrika Formica said, and patted me with her mouth-threads.

“We like you all right, Rufa,” said one of the nurses; “though you are so funny and excited,” said another, bowing with her head. I bowed in return and waved my mouth-threads to show them I did not mind. But afterwards I whispered to Fredrika Formica:



“Why has my baby those rags on him?”

“Look at mine,” Fredrika Formica said.

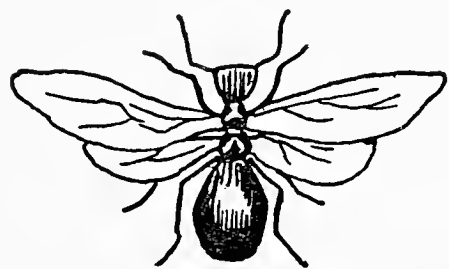
And when I looked at her baby, he had the same kind of rags too.

“Look at the others’ babies,” Fredrika Formica said. And they all had rags.

“What is it, what in the world is it, Fredrika Formica? Whose babies have we got by mistake?”

“Just wait a bit and you will see. Lick your baby now, he is the right baby, never fear, and be careful with the rags, and you shall see what happens to them.”

Then, while I stood there washing and tidying the baby, I saw the rags slowly spreading out until they became the finest, thinnest cloth, which was stretched out between several strong laths. On each side of the chest were



one large and one smaller veil, and I thought they looked as if they were woven of the tears of the sun. But that could hardly be possible, for I had many times tried to catch the tears which lay in the woods in green houses, but they always ran away. Sometimes, I had sucked them up into my maw; ah, yes, but I had fed these babies from the maw afterwards, both I and the other nurses, who very probably had drunken tears also. They may have come from the sun after all.

“Are they not beautiful?” Fredrika Formica said,

who had come up without my noticing it. "Those are wings. They have wings and some day they will fly out high up in the air, higher than the trees."

"Will they fly up to the sun?"

"I don't know, I don't know; I have never had wings," Fredrika Formica said, and bent her head deep down to the ground so that I could not look at her, but I saw her mouth-threads trembling and I felt strange within me, for I had no wings either. I could never fly, I was no child of the sun, and I never could become one. What was I then?

"Rufa, the working ant, the funny and excited one," said the others.

I had to run away quickly before anyone should see me, even Fredrika Formica. But after a while Fredrika Formica came looking for me. She said nothing about my having run away from work, she only petted me with her mouth-threads and was so kind and good that I soon grew happy again and said:

"Do you know, I have never wondered why the sun laughed, I've only thought about its tears, but now I know that it is because Fredrika Formica lives that the sun is glad."

CHAPTER V

THE WEDDING DAY

NOW we had more work than ever in the stack. The new children, the princes and princesses, were so heedless and it was hard for them to learn anything. Especially was this the case with the princes, they could not even learn to eat, but we must feed them as if they were little babies; and it was not much better with the princesses. Besides we had to watch them, for Fredrika Formica said they were forbidden to leave the stack; but we must be very polite to them, bow and curtsy and beg them with many kind words to please stay at home. I felt sorry for them. Nothing could they do, they were not allowed to walk out, much less fly with their pretty wings. If Fredrika Formica had not been so strict, I believe I should have let those I had the care of run away.

“Have patience now,” Fredrika Formica said, “and you will see great splendor on the wedding day.”

“What day is that?” I asked.

“That is the day when they shall fly out all together. But their wings must grow strong first and then we must wait for the loveliest day of summer.”

“When will it come then?”

“It will come on the wedding day, and the wedding day will be then, that is all I know,” Fredrika Formica said.

“Yes, but Fredrika Formica,” I said one day, when we were fetching out food for the house, “to-day is surely the loveliest day of summer. Why don’t we have the wedding to-day?”

“Not to-day, Rufa, not to-day, but perhaps to-morrow. I feel something in my legs; we shall see, we shall see, if we don’t have to creep into the stack pretty soon and close all doors.”

“Why so?” I asked, “the sun is glad and kind and the air is still and warm.”

“Yes, it is almost too still and warm,” Fredrika Formica said, “but if Boozeboss comes to-day we may, perhaps, hold the wedding to-morrow.”

“Boozeboss!” I said, “why do you call the tears Boozeboss?”

“Isn’t that a good name,” Fredrika Formica said, and just then we reached home and ran in to all those who waited us with empty stomachs. Just as we were feeding the royal children I heard some one cry:—

“Close all the doors! Close all the doors! Bring the princes and princesses to the underground floor! Save all pupæ and babies! Quickly, quickly, all hide in the cellar! There is going to be a terrible storm with sun-snakes and roarings.”

“What are sun-snakes and roarings?” I asked Fredrika

Formica, while we shooed the royal children before us down to the lower flats where it was safe and secure.

“I have never seen them,” Fredrika Formica said, “I have always been the kind to creep into the ground when I have felt it commence to prick in my legs, and it has always done so before the sun-snakes and roarings began. I said a while ago that I thought Boozeboss would come, and it always comes after snakes and roarings.”

“I should so like to see it,” I said.

“No, no, Rufa, you must not think of going out, some accident might happen.”

“I won’t go out, I will only look through a doorway,” I said, “and if it is dangerous I will run downstairs.”

And before Fredrika Formica had time to say a word, I had turned and rushed up-stairs to one of the tower-rooms, but just as I came up and peeped through a crack in the door, I saw something awful, long and crooked flying along on a black shawl which hung behind the tree tops. It looked as if the sun had been very angry and had waved with its mouth-threads. And then the sun spoke!

But now I was so frightened, that all my legs gave way under me, and I became so weak that I could not stand, much less could I run away. For a long time I lay in the tower-room and saw the snakes and heard the sun speak.

“You must not!—You shall!” I heard it say again and again. At last I whispered:

“Sun, dear sun, what is it I must not do, and what shall I do?”

But the sun only answered; “You must not,—you shall!”

“What do you mean, what do you mean, sun?” I whispered again.

“You must not,—you shall!” the sun answered once more after a while.

“Do you mean that I shall think for myself what it is I must not do and what I shall do?” I whispered.

“You shall!” said the sun, and then it spoke no more, but the tears began to fall close and fast so that I could see nothing.

At this moment Fredrika Formica came to seek for me. “Dear Rufa,” she said, “what made you do this? I have been so anxious about you. Are you ill, Rufa?” And without asking any more she began rubbing me from head to foot.

“Are you better now, then come on my back! I will carry you down.” And Fredrika Formica carried me down-stairs into one of the rooms in the basement and coddled me until I was well again.

“Do you know, Fredrika Formica,” I said when I felt better, “the sun has spoken to me.”

“What are you saying, what are you saying?”

“Yes, it spoke, but I did not understand what it said. ‘You must not,—you shall,’ it said again and again. What do you suppose it meant?”

“I have never heard anyone say before that the sun has spoken, Rufa, are you sure that it did so?”

“Why, I heard it, Fredrika Formica, and it said the same thing many times. It did not want to explain what it meant, but when I asked if it wished me to think for myself, it answered; ‘You shall!’ Can’t you help me Fredrika Formica, you who know everything?”

“Dear little Rufa, I know nothing about the sun, but what we two have talked over together, and who knows, Rufa, if what we believe is the truth? It is very difficult to know, when it is so far away. Perhaps, sometime, when you are older, we can go on a journey, and search for the earth hole in which the sun sleeps at night, and you may see it and speak with it and ask it all you want to know. Shall we do that?”

“Yes, yes, Fredrika Formica, I should so love to do that. Am I not old enough now? Can’t we go right away, dear, sweet Fredrika Formica?”

“No, no, no,” Fredrika Formica said, “to-morrow we shall have the wedding in the house, and much work is to be done. And afterward, do you know, Rufa, afterward, a strange time will come, when we shall all grow sleepy and tired, and must sleep, and do nothing but sleep

during a long, long night, and then it is best to be at home."

"How do you know the wedding will be to-morrow?" I asked.

"Because after sun-snakes and roars and Boozeboss the most beautiful day of summer generally comes. We shall see to-morrow."

And Fredrika Formica was right. It was the most beautiful, beautiful weather. The sun smiled so joyously and all the trees were as still as if they stood on guard, and all green pillars and ribbons and flags and tassels were dressed in their prettiest clothes and glittered and shone. And, in the stack, oh, what a hurry and scurry there was! All rushed hither and thither, up and down, and all were anxious and excited.

"Now let us fly," said the princes.

"No, wait a little, wait a little," said the princesses.

"Yes, wait a bit," said the nurses, "everything is not ready yet, how are your wings looking?"

And once more they trimmed and tidied the royal children's lovely wings, which were perfectly all right before.

"But now we fly," the princes said, and began to spread their wings. Then I too became impatient and I cried aloud.

"Fly, fly and greet the sun!" and in that moment they all flew up thick and fast so that the air was full of them.

Wherever we looked we saw only our royal children, and higher and higher they rose, higher than the tree tops, and then we saw them no more.

“Fredrika Formica,” I whispered so that nobody else could hear, “should you not like to be with them up there?”

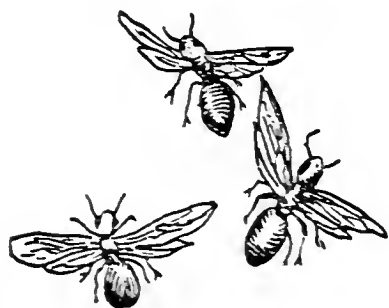
Fredrika Formica, who had stood looking after them, now turned to me.

“Who would see to house and home,” she said, “if all wanted to fly to the sun? Of course, though, it feels a little strange when one sees them fly. But now look well about you, for I think our neighbors are also having a wedding to-day.”

She had hardly finished speaking before I saw a thick pillar rising from the neighboring stack. It was their royal children going on their wedding flight. They danced higher and higher. The sun shone on their wings,—and then they too vanished.

“Fredrika Formica,” I said, “what shall we do now? You cannot mean that we shall work on the great wedding day?”

“No,” Fredrika Formica said, “we shall go on a tour.” And we set out. After a while we began to climb a tall,



green pillar which had little green flags at the sides, and on the top there was a big, blue house with a green carpet under it. Such a funny tinkling sound came from the blue house, and when we stepped on the carpet to climb into the house, it sang;

“Unbidden guests, unbidden guests,”

“What are they saying?” I asked.

“Don’t mind them,” Fredrika Formica said, “they are very impolite here, but I don’t think they mean it ill. We will go in anyway.”

When we came in, there stood some one tall and slender who bowed and curtsied, saying: “Everything is closed here, everything is closed!”

“What is your name?” I asked.

“Maiden Pistil,” she said.

“Well, what threads are those then?”

“Five stamina brothers who have died from me,” she answered, and a tear rose in her eye.



“Whom are you standing and waiting for here?” I asked.

“I don’t know, I don’t know; but not for you, for then my bell would have rung:—‘Welcome, welcome!’”

Just then the bell began to ring: “Welcome, welcome, welcome!”

“Hurry out from here, and let us see who is coming,” Fredrika Formica said, and we had barely time to get out before there was a whizz in the air and a big fat figure bounced right into the middle of the house without even saying good day, and without caring to listen to how prettily it sang all the time: “Welcome, welcome!”



Little Maiden Pistil bowed many greetings to the homely old man, and she laid her face, which was wet with tears about the dear stamina brothers, against the old man’s thick and dusty fur coat.

“Who is that ugly man?” I asked.

“That is Boomboss, bumblebee,” Fredrika Formica said.

“Boomboss, that is just a suitable name; Boomboss, Boomboss, have you not learned to bow?” I cried aloud after him, and he answered, *Srrrrrrrrrr!* and off he flew in a whiff.

When we afterward looked in on the little maiden

Pistil, we found her powdered all over her face by the careless, nasty Boomboss.

“I will help you and lick you clean,” I said.

“No, no,” she cried, and bent away from me quite frightened; “don’t touch me, don’t touch me!”

“Let her be,” Fredrika Formica whispered, “I believe they are gifts from her friends. Don’t you see, they are small balls, and do you hear what the bell is ringing now?”

“Empty house, empty house.”

“What have they had here then?” I asked.

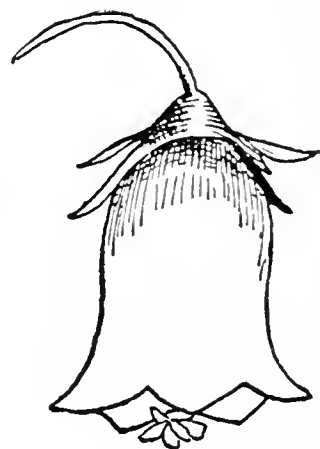
“They have had something you would like very much, they have had honey. But you see Boomboss ate it all up. Probably we shall find something good somewhere else. Come, let us go.”

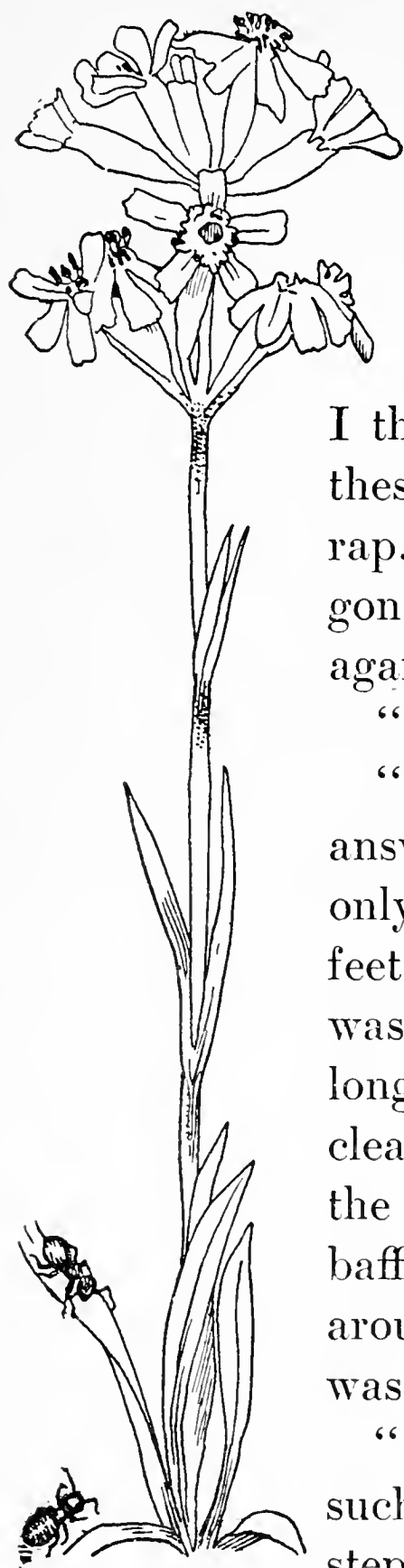
When we had walked a little while, I said, “I will climb up here, this pillar looks nice.”

“All right,” Fredrika Formica said, “I shall stand here and wait.”

I wondered a little why Fredrika Formica did not come up too, but I went on just the same. The pillar was so pretty. It shone red, and little green flags were hung out. On one streamer I stopped and called:

“You come up too, Fredrika Formica, it is lovely here.”





“Yes, perhaps I had better come and see how it goes with you.”

“I am doing very well,” I said, and I climbed higher, but now some one called;

“Forbidden road, forbidden road!”

“It is as Fredrika Formica said,” I thought, “they are dreadfully impolite, these pillar people, but nobody cares a rap.” And I went on. But I had only gone a little way when some one called again;

“Forbidden road, forbidden road!”

“Who is calling?” I asked, but no one answered. Then I pushed on, but had only taken a few steps when one of my feet stuck in a thick, nasty glue, which was on the pillar. I had to struggle a long time before my foot became free and clean and brushed again. “I will go on the other side,” I thought, and felt rather baffled over it all. And around and around I ran, but around and around was the glue.

“I will take long steps, there cannot be such a great deal,” I thought and I bravely stepped right into the midst of the thick

glue. But there I had to remain standing. Just as I thought to call for help, Fredrika Formica came.

“But, dear Rufa, where are you standing?” she asked.

“Right in the glue,” I said.

“Well, it is not as bad as it looks,” Fredrika Formica said, and laughed; “stand still now, while I fetch some stones for me to step on, so we may not both stick in it, for that were worse.” And she ran down and up again, many times, bringing stones which she laid out for a bridge. On it she came over to me, and began to draw me out.

You should have seen how I looked, Biggie and Gunnie. Yes, just as you did when you had been in the clay down at the seashore last summer. While Fredrika Formica helped to brush and rub me clean she asked if no one had warned me against going on.

“Yes, somebody cried, ‘Forbidden road,’ but I did not care,” I said.

“I thought surely you would call and ask me why the road was forbidden.”

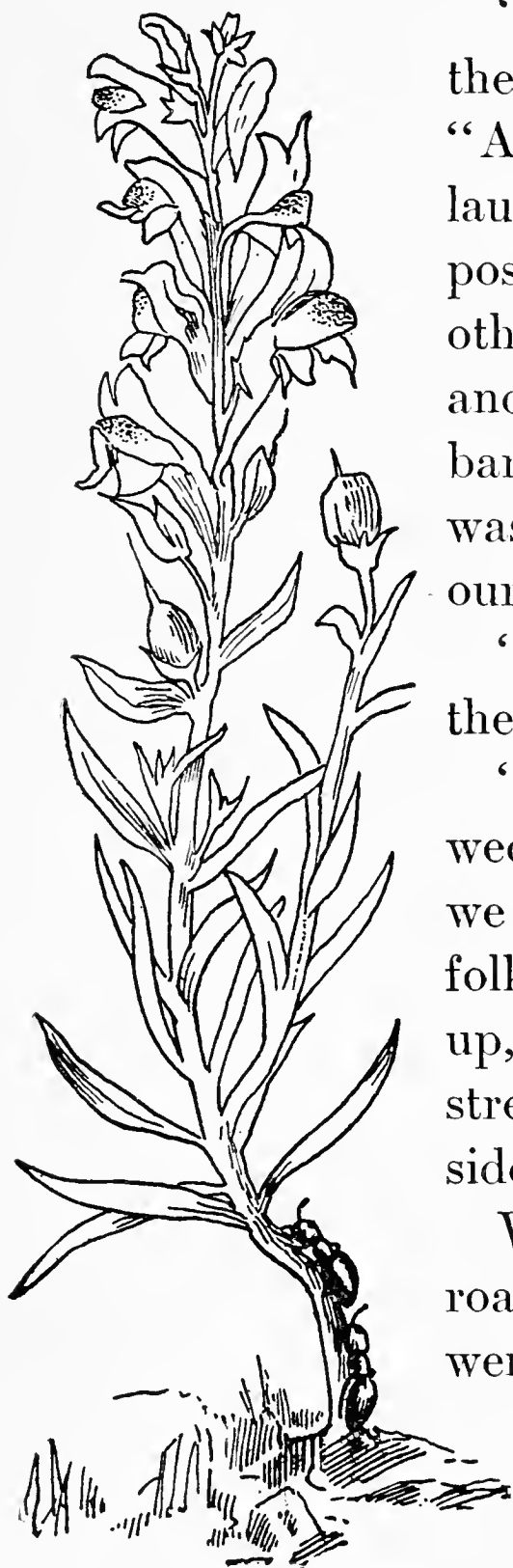
“I thought I would try to manage by myself for once, and this is what happened,” I said.

“Well, well, better luck next time,” Fredrika Formica said kindly, giving me a last brush off. And then we walked down from the tar pillar and passed on our way.

“Well, what shall we do now?” I asked.

“So you think you’ve enjoyed yourself?”

“Yes, yes,” I said, “I wonder if others can enjoy themselves as we do.”



“I don’t know, but why should they not?” Fredrika Formica said. “All that we see and point at and laugh at is also for them, and I suppose all little ants have sometime or other put their legs in the tar flood and made themselves sticky and embarrassed just like you, if that really was any fun. But now we must get ourselves some food, Rufa.”

“Shall we go and hunt for cows then?”

“No, I intend to treat you to a wedding feast. Come with me and we will try our luck with this pillar folk.” And once more we climbed up, passing a great many small streamers and slender flags on all sides.

We soon came to a point where the road divided, but Fredrika Formica went right forward on the broader road and came to a queer house with a tall pole on the roof.

“This is only a ruin,” she said,

and passed by and came to a stately house with pale yellow and red walls.

“But there is no door,” I said.

“Oh, yes, there is, but it is closed.”

“Let us knock then,” I said.

“Try it,” Fredrika Formica answered.

I walked up to the door which was closed tight, knocked and cried; “Please let us in.”

“Come in if you can, come in if you can,” was the answer from within the house.

“I can’t get the door open,” I called back.

“Then stay where you are, then stay where you are,” it answered.

“Nothing do we get here either, Fredrika Formica,” I said, quite disappointed, “and now I am really hungry.”

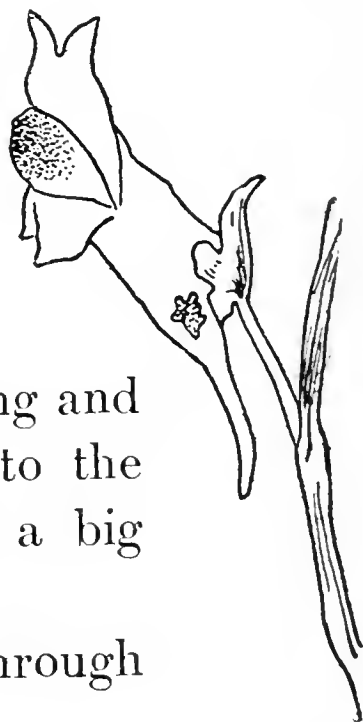
But Fredrika Formica only laughed at me and said:

“Come here, Rufa, and see what a trick I know.”

When I came to her, I found her biting and biting at a little tube which belonged to the house and pretty soon she had bitten a big hole in the tube.

“Now come, Rufa, put your head through the hole and drink.”

And do you know, Biggie and Gunnie, I have never



again tasted anything so good as what I got to drink from that yellow house. All the time I heard some one calling:

“Shoo, shoo, who is sucking my honey? Shoo, shoo!”

But Fredrika Formica who was standing by, said, “Just drink, drink, Rufa, don’t mind what they chatter, they don’t mean any harm.”

We had wandered about the bright, pretty houses for a while, when Fredrika Formica said: “Now we must go home.”

“Already?” I asked.

“Yes, Rufa, you see we must be there to receive the princesses if they should happen to get home to-day.”

“How about the princes?”

“Do you know Rufa, the princes will never come back to us any more, and I don’t believe anybody wants them.”

“Why, what happens to them then?”

“Well, I am afraid it is all over with them,” Fredrika Formica said, shaking her head. “But do you know,” she said, “not even all of the princesses will find their way home.”

“Is it all over with them too?” I asked.

“No, at least not with all. You remember they were much more sensible than the princes. They will start housekeeping in some little hole in the ground, and there they lay eggs and take care of them and the children, until these can begin to work, drag logs, and build the stack, and so there will be a new ant nest.”

“Yes,” I said, “but it is a pity about the princes.”

“Yes, so it is,” Fredrika Formica said, “but look you, look there! there! there is one of our princesses! Make haste, make haste, we must take her home. Hurry, hurry, Rufa, come quick!” and Fredrika Formica was so excited that all her threads and legs shook and trembled. She flew ahead to the little princess, who looked so lonely and tired. When Fredrika Formica came up to her, she bowed and curtsied many times, much lower and more politely than we used to before.

“Dear lady queen,” she said, “we will help you, Rufa and I. Rufa, come here and greet her,” she whispered to me, “curtsy, curtsy and ask if the queen will allow you to help her home.”

“Would the little princess——” I said.

“‘Lady queen,’ you should say; she is queen now.” Fredrika Formica whispered and gave me a push.

“May I help little lady queen home?” I asked, bowing and waving my mouth-threads.

While Fredrika Formica and I were talking with the little tired queen, one of our sisters came up and bowed and curtsied as well, but as soon as she had made her greeting, she went close to the queen and commenced to bite and scratch at something on her back. The little queen said nothing, she only sighed very deeply.

“What are you doing?” I cried. “For shame, for shame, how wicked you are,” I screamed, for in that

moment I saw that she bit off the queen's wings, "Shame! shame!" and I rushed at her and began to beat her with my legs.

"Rufa!" Fredrika Formica called, and her voice was so stern that I ceased fighting at once and came away. "Poor Rufa," Fredrika Formica said, and instead of being provoked with me, she petted me with her mouth-threads. "I ought to have told you that the princesses' wings must be taken off when they get home. Once they may fly, but after that, never again any more. You see, Rufa, in the stack their wings would only become soiled and torn. Is it not better then to cut them off? What do you say, Rufa?"

"I don't know, I don't know at all," I said, "but I feel as if we were very cruel to the poor little royal children."

"No, Rufa, we don't wish to treat them badly, we never forget that the royal children have once flown high, high, where we never can get, and for that reason we are always kind to them, and take the best care of them. Do you know, Rufa, I once saw a queen who did not wish to come home, but wanted to keep house for herself. Before she went to her ground hole, she stood on her wings and turned and twisted and bent until she herself finally got the wings loose. The wings would only be in the way during the every day work, she said. Now then, Rufa, don't you understand, that it is not from cruelty that we bite

off the wings, and it is not dangerous even if it hurts a little? We ants must not be squeamish."

"I don't mind about the hurt," I said, "but their wings, that was the best they had."

"Yes, that is true," Fredrika Formica said, "but one would not wish to soil the best they have. But come now, and you may carry the queen home to the stacks." And that is how we returned home the evening of the wedding day.

CHAPTER VI

FIRE

SUMMER'S loveliest day had passed, and the royal children had made their wedding flight, most of them had never returned, but from all the queens who had returned home, the wings had been bitten off just as they had from Fredrika Formica's little queen and mine; and though I knew that Fredrika Formica was right in what she said, yet I could not but feel sorry for them all, and when I met them anywhere in the stack,



I always stopped and curtsied deeply, thinking, "You have been a princess and had wings, poor little queen."

And once more I bowed, but I did not speak to them, because I don't think they wished me to.



One day when I was alone in the woods and had gone quite far, I noticed that the sun began to creep behind its curtain. Then I turned so as to get to the stack before it became dark night and Boozeboss. I was in such a hurry that I had no time to look round me, I only ran on with my head close to the ground. Suddenly I

heard a strange sound up in the air and some one called.

“Save yourselves, save yourselves, little lives! Fly and creep, fly and creep!”

I stopped to ask what had happened, but the one who called had been in a great hurry and was already gone. When I turned around I saw something strange behind me, between the trees in the woods. “What may that be?” I wondered, climbing a little pillar so as to see better, and then I saw something which made me fearful and glad at the same time.

The sun, the sun had fallen down and lay in the woods! There it was now, the sun which I had always been so fond of.

Again I heard some one call up in the air, “Save yourselves, save yourselves, little lives!”

“Why do they call like that, can it be the sun that they are afraid of?” I wondered. “I will run home quickly for Fredrika Formica, and we will go back together to the sun.” I let myself down from the pillar and started to run. When I came in sight of the stack, I called far off:

“Fredrika Formica, Fredrika Formica!” and when she heard me and came toward me, I cried, “Fredrika Formica the sun has fallen down into the woods, I have seen it.”

“The sun? Has it fallen? What are you saying?”

“Yes, yes, I have seen it. It lies in the woods near here.”

“But Rufa,” Fredrika Formica said, “look up then!”

“Where to? Where do you want me to look?”

“Up to the sky, beyond the tree tops, where the sun generally is.”

And when I looked up, I saw the sun peeping from behind its curtain.

“Well, what do you think now?” Fredrika Formica said, and looked at me laughingly.

“I don’t know, but *one* sun lies in the woods, for I saw it, and others must have seen it too, for I heard them calling up in the air, ‘Save yourselves, little lives, save yourselves.’ ”

“Who called so?” Fredrika Formica asked, and stopped her laughing at once. “Did you know them?”

“No,” I said, “they were strange voices.”

“Then there must be great fear and danger for the whole woods,” Fredrika Formica said. We must tell them in the stack immediately. And Fredrika Formica rushed into the stack calling aloud continually, “The woods are in danger, the woods are in danger.”

“What has happened now?” was called back from all sides.

“I don’t know, but the people of the air are flying away and calling to the ground dwellers to save themselves.”

“Then there must be danger indeed! All babies, eggs and pupæ must be brought into the basements at once,

and it is best for the others to be there also.” And we pulled and dragged and carried with all our might. Every one worked without as much as looking up, until all ants were in safety, then I whispered to Fredrika Formica, “Shall we not go and find out what has happened?”

“Yes,” Fredrika Formica answered, “we will go now.”

We went out from the stack and climbed up in a tree, and from there we both saw the sun in the woods. But how terribly it had grown since I first saw it! Awful and cruel it looked and a great hissing and roaring was heard from it.

“What is it, since it is not the sun?” I asked trembling.

“It is the red flower and all lives in the woods and in the air are terrified when it grows up. It eats all and everything, animals, men and plants and it is never satisfied because the more it eats, the larger and hungrier does it grow. Come now, Rufa, quickly, quickly, we must get home and hide deep in the ground, else we perish.” And Fredrika Formica gave me a push and we both began to run. Suddenly we heard fresh sounds from the woods and when I looked up I saw several large trees shaking and tottering, and then they fell.

“What is it now?” I whispered. “The red flower has not yet reached them, why do they fall?”

“Do you see, look, do you see,” Fredrika Formica

whispered in answer, "there are men, it is they who bite off the trees with their sharp fore legs."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but look—look Rufa, the red flower throws itself upon the men. See now they are beginning to dig deep paths in the ground between the flower and themselves. Do you know, Rufa, they are trying to starve the red flower to death. It cannot live unless it eats and eats, all the time and now it cannot reach anything when the trees are gone, and the deep path is dug in the ground. The men will save us, the men will save us!" Fredrika Formica cried, almost beside herself. She had entirely forgotten her fear and that we were to run home! We stayed on and watched. The red flower grew really thinner and its voice became weaker. Already we thought that the danger was past, but suddenly there came a strong puff of wind, and the red flower swallowed so much air at once that it grew and became so big that the men began to run away in our direction.

"Now down and away, fast, fast, if we still have time," Fredrika Formica said, and off we ran.

"Does it eat wind also?" I asked while we ran.

"Yes, yes, everything, everything it eats," Fredrika Formica said, "all, even us, if we do not hurry."

When we had been running for some time, we noticed that the ground was covered with fleeing lives. Some sighed and moaned; "My little ones, my little ones, where

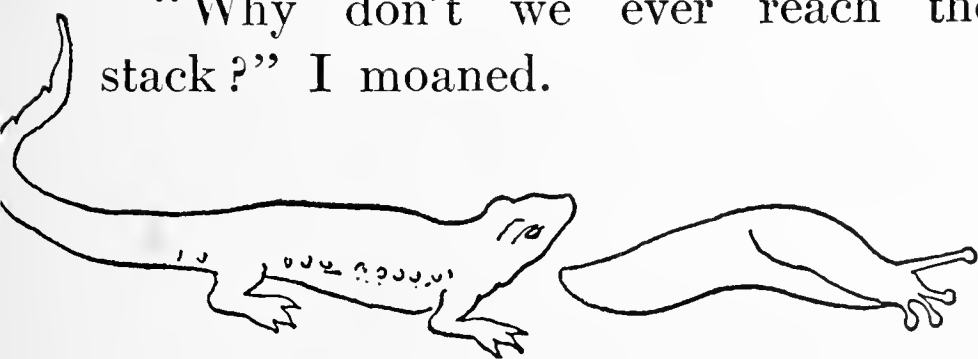
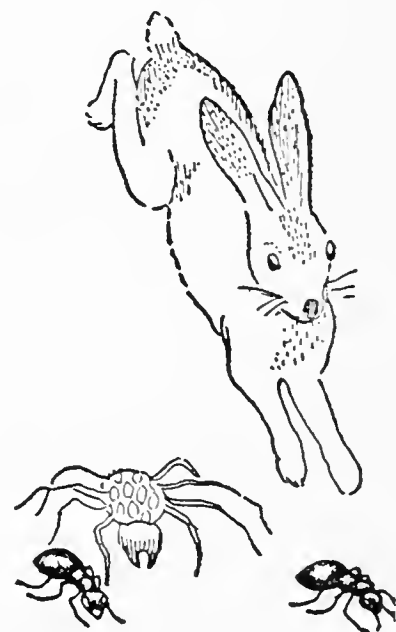
are my little ones?" Others drove their young before them, crying, "Hurry, hurry, little ones!" All ran on together, big and small, and none thought of hurting the other. In the air there was also great anxiety and grief. There was flapping and flying and wailing all about. Hotter and hotter it grew around us, and the red flower kept throwing dark clouds after us, to daze and confuse us. Sometimes seeds would fly over

our heads, from the red flower, and where they fell down, there grew up at once a glowing, hot, dangerous red flower baby.

"Fredrika Formica," I whispered, "I am so tired and it is so hot! I cannot run any further."

"But you must," Fredrika Formica answered, and she began to run behind me. Every time I slowed up she would give a push and cry, "Better speed, Rufa, don't give up!" and we ran on and on.

"Why don't we ever reach the stack?" I moaned.



“We must have lost our way in the confusion,” Fredrika Formica answered. “I think we shall have to dig our way into the earth anywhere, if we only have time to get down deep enough to be saved. It eats deep into the ground also, the terrible flower!”

We stopped and began to dig and bite and scratch in the earth to get down into it, but it was slow work and the red flower came nearer and nearer. I think the men still stayed between it and us and bit off trees and dug paths, but we no longer believed that they could save either themselves or us. Then we heard a rustling which we recognized, and in that moment there fell from the sun a flood of tears so strong, that we were carried along in a rushing, whirling stream that continually grew larger and stronger, and at last swallowed me so that I knew no more. When I again understood anything, the first thing I felt was that some one was licking and smoothing and rubbing me. It was, of course, Fredrika Formica who had pulled me out of the tear flood where I otherwise should have been drowned.

“Where is the red flower?” I asked, as soon as I could speak.

“Gone,” Fredrika Formica said, “the rain has swallowed it up and all its young ones. They are all dead.”

“And the men and all the others?”

“I suppose they have hidden themselves as we have, but they will come out again when the sun begins to shine.”

“But listen, Fredrika Formica, the men wanted to help the woods and us.”

“Yes, so they did.”

“Then they are not as wicked as we thought.”

“No; do you know, Rufa, it is very difficult to understand them when one is as small as you and I are, and perhaps men, on their side, are too big to understand us.”

“Probably so, and now I think I know what the sun meant when it spoke to me.”

“Well, what then?”

“You must not think ill of others at once. You shall think, think carefully and be gentle and kind. Don’t you think that is what the sun wants?”

“Yes, I can well believe that,” Fredrika Formica said, and continued to rub me.

“Thank you, thank you, Fredrika Formica,” I said, “I am well now.” And then we both ran to the stack.

CHAPTER VII

A HUNTING TRIP

“**R**UFA, Rufa,” Fredrika Formica called one day, shortly after the awful red day, “come with me; now we are going hunting.”

“Hunting!” I said, “I have never gone hunting before.”

“Then it is high time you learned,” said Fredrika Formica. “You understand we must be well filled and fat when the long night comes, otherwise we can’t hold out, and so it is not enough to sip honeydew and sweet-meats only, we must get strong meat food now. Out in the woods there is game of all kinds.”

“But then, we are just as bad as the ant-lion,” I said, terror-stricken.

“Yes,” said Fredrika Formica, “we are all alike, but one forgets that at times.”

“Shall we dig pits as the lion does, and lie in wait?” I asked, when we had walked a little way.

“No, indeed,” Fredrika Formica answered, “we hunt in another way, we do. Quick one must be, and have sharp teeth, and not be afraid if one is to be any good in our hunt. And remember that you have ant acid in your

hind body. First you must bite and then squirt your acid into the wound and your prey will be easily stupefied."

"But what are we to hunt?" I asked.

"All that we can catch is ours, and no ant is afraid; Rufa."

"No indeed," I said.

"Watch now, Rufa, this is how one does it," Fredrika Formica cried, and flew at a big bug, nipped its back and bent herself like a bow. The bug shook itself and ran off, but Fredrika Formica held on. The bug turned and twisted every way, and suddenly took a strange leap high up in the air. Both fell down and rolled in different directions. "Now it will get away," I thought. But no, Fredrika Formica was up in a second and ran after it and then they began over again. After a while the bug lay quite still and Fredrika Formica called:



"Come here, Rufa, now we will drag it home."

"What kind of bug is this?" I asked while we dragged it along the road.

"It is a snap-beetle," Fredrika Formica answered. "Did you not see how it jumped high in the air with me on its back?"

"Yes," I said, "but was it not a little dangerous for you too?"

“Yes, of course, but do you know, Rufa, one never thinks of that, and that click-beetle was not afraid either. We are all like that when we are hunting. Do you know, I once fought with Boomboss himself. He flew high up in the air and whirled and flapped and buzzed so that I was quite dizzy and deaf, I came near to perishing, but in the last moment, I squirted so much ant acid into him that he grew dizzy himself and fell, and then we dragged him to the stack. But listen, Rufa, as soon as we have fetched this snapper home, we will go to the woods for adventures. Do you want to go?”

“Oh, yes, please let us go, Fredrika Formica.”

“I like these rambles much better than hunting,” I said, when we had returned to the woods again, after having left our prey in the stack.

“Yes, yes, but hunting is good also,” Fredrika Formica said, “and now while we are out, we shall see how other little lives hunt, and defend themselves against their hunters.” And we went far into the woods where I had never been before.

“What are these little green lives that all stand pressed close to each other, as if they were afraid?” I asked, when we wandered across a green spread made up of tiny little pillars.

“Ask them,” Fredrika Formica said.

“Do you hear,” I cried, “who are you, and what can you do?”

"We are so many, so many," was murmured in answer from a thousand slender, live stems.

"I see that, but what is your name?"

"Moss, moss, moss," they answered and then a couple of small yellow tips flew high up in the air.

"What was that?"

"Caps, caps, caps," they answered and then they mumbled something about it being stupid to wear a cap so late in the summer and that some are so slow that they never get ready in time.

"What do they mean?" I asked Fredrika Formica.

"I don't know," she said, "but probably they think it is impolite to the hot summer to stand with their caps on their heads."

"Well, do you do any work, little mosses?" I asked.

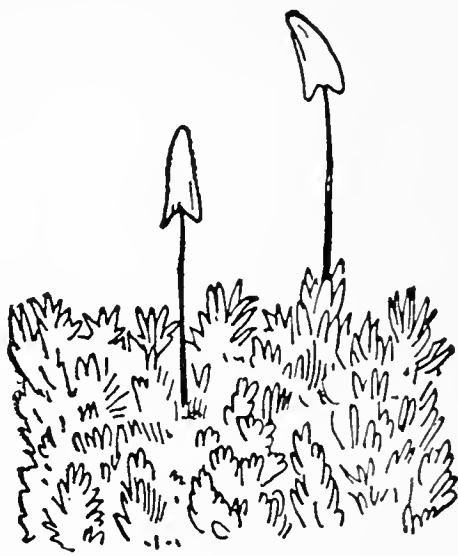
Then there sang so many words all together in answer, that Fredrika Formica pinched me in fright and whispered, "Come! Come!"

But then it sang worse than ever: "Stop and listen, stop and listen."

"Well what shall we hear?"

"We are so many, so many."

"Yes, we see that, you don't need to tell that over and



over again. Many you are, but what can you do? Now answer calmly," I said.

"It is we who work for the whole woods, without us they would all die, the stately trees, the happy flowers and you too, you too."

"Don't talk such foolishness," Fredrika Formica said, and her feelings were hurt. "*We* at least work for ourselves and our children. What great work is it you do?"

"We drink, we drink more than anyone else, we drink until we become fat and round."

"Yes, I might have known you were stingier than others," Fredrika Formica said, still provoked over their boast.

"Stingier!" said one moss stretching its cap-clad head on a terribly long, slender neck; "stingier you say, but who is it that is stingy later when the dry season comes? Yes, then they all suck from us, until we become dry as threads and yet they don't get enough. To save is to have, it is said, but what we save, the whole woods take.

But none has sense enough to thank us." And again all voices sang, "We are so many, so many!"

While they kept calling, Fredrika Formica and I stole away. We were somewhat embarrassed, for we did not



know but that they were right. After a while we came to another moss blanket, but here the mosses were white and different from the former in other ways also. I took good care not to begin talking with them, but I whispered to Fredrika Formica, "These don't seem to be able to drink all they get, it is so damp here."

But they had heard what I said, for all around me it was cried: "Damp, damp, what do you suppose would happen if we did not stand here on guard? Overflowed it would be; you would all drown, all, all!"

We did not answer, but hastened onward.

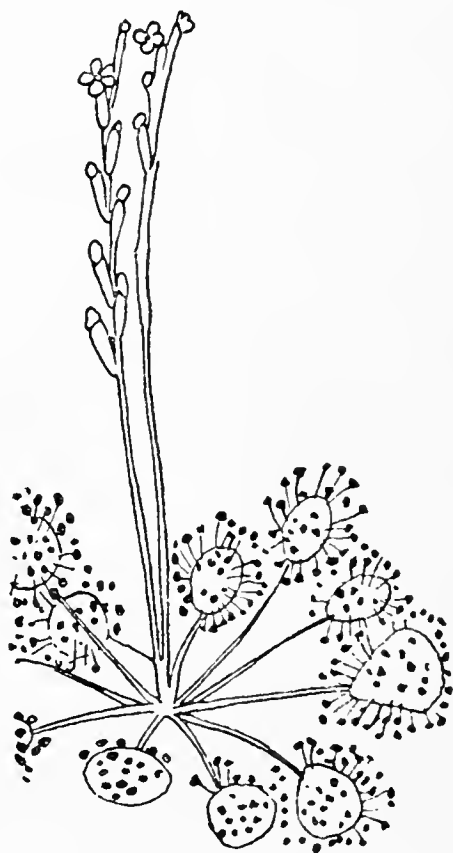
"Now, look well where you step," Fredrika Formica said, "and if you see something red and sweet, then take care."

After a while I really saw something red glimmer in front of me, and I called to Fredrika Formica.

"Yes, that is just what I meant," she said. "Now we will walk quite close and sit there and wait and then we shall see what happens."

"Do I dare to talk with it?" I asked.

"Talk on," Fredrika Formica said, "but don't let it fool you!"



“What is your name?”

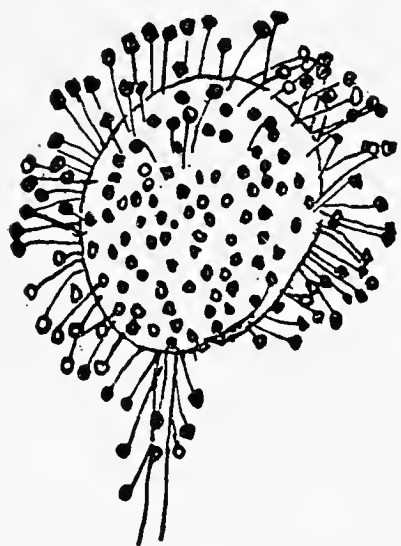
“Sundew, little Rufa.”

“Fredrika Formica, it knows me, and it has such a pretty name!”

“Yes, when she says it,” Fredrika Formica mumbled.

“Why do you have needles on your leaves? It looks dangerous, Sundew.”

“Don’t you see that there are red pearls stuck on them, and round each pearl a pretty drop glitters? I should think it would be something to taste. Please, help yourself!”



“Fredrika Formica,” I whispered, “it is inviting me to taste.”

“Do you remember the tar blossom, Rufa?” Fredrika Formica asked.

“Yes, yes,” I said, and I turned to Sundew. “No, thanks, your honey would be gone long ago, if there were not something wrong with it, when you don’t keep it better hidden.”

“Listen there, listen there, how wise she pretends to be, the little one,” Sundew laughed. “But you might be a little more polite when one offers you from a kind heart.”

“Oh, yes, if I only knew that it was from a good heart you offered me, I should indeed be more polite, but I am afraid you just wanted to fool me into something I should have regretted afterwards.”

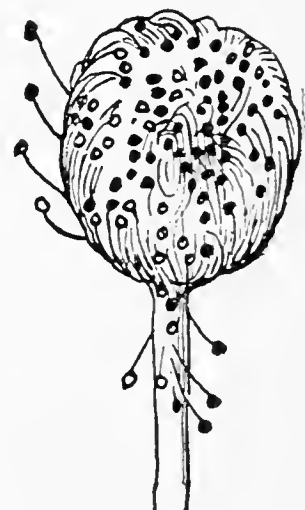
Then Sundew laughed cunningly and nodded, "Yes, yes, little friend, always be careful, and watch well what you do, and you will get along nicely in the world." And then she turned away from me.

"Fredrika Formica," I said, "Sundew is very nice."

"We will wait and see," Fredrika Formica said.

Just then something hummed joyously in the air above us and before I had time to say a word a little fly sat on Sundew's leaf.

And now you should have seen, Biggie and Gunnie, what happened. It was worse than it was for me in the tar flood. The honey was no honey, but only glue which sucked and held tight any one who dared to touch it, and Sundew's red-stemmed pearls were no pearls, but cruel, griping claws that slowly curved together. Even the whole leaf did the same and closed like a big fist around the fly. There it was now caught in the trap.



"Shame, shame, Sundew, what are you doing?" I cried. But it did not answer. "Sundew, Sundew, why do you do so?" I asked once more.

"Don't you understand that I am eating? You should see my roots, how small and weak they are, and you should know how poor the earth is, that I stand in, and then you would understand that I should starve if I did not know this trick. In a few days I open my red honey-hand again.

Then it is dry, and only a little husk is left of the fly. The wind sweeps that away. Then I press forth clear drops round the pearls and am ready to catch anew. Don't

you think this is a nice way to hunt?" Sundew smiled.

"I don't know which way of hunting is better, your way or the ant-lions."

"Or your own," Sundew said.

"Yes, or my own," I said thoughtfully, and turned to Fredrika Formica. "Shall we go on now?"

"Yes, I should like to," Fredrika Formica said, "I am quite tired of Sundew's chatter."

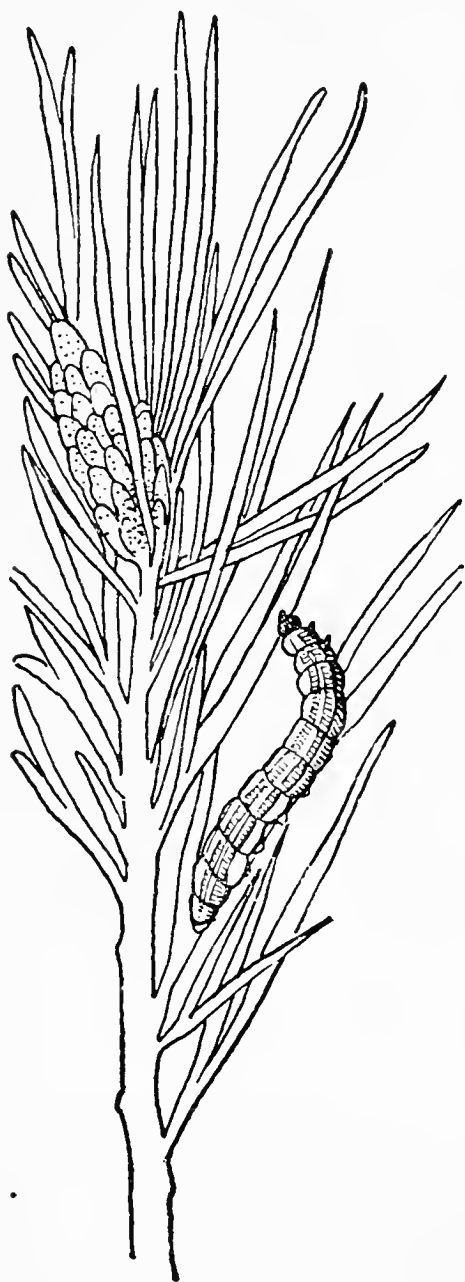
"Good-bye, dear little Rufa," Sundew called after us.

I nodded and curtsied and then I followed Fredrika Formica, who was running ahead.

"Rufa," Fredrika Formica called, when we had gone a little way; "come up here, and I will show you

the right size of game for you to try to hunt for the first time." And then Fredrika Formica climbed up in a tree.

"Shall we begin hunting again now?" I asked dis-



contentedly. "Then you won't have time to show me all you promised for I suppose we must drag the prey home to the stack at once."

"Well, well, calm yourself, Rufa, we have not seen you succeed in your sport yet. Come here and look. Do you see there? On the green pole lies a fly larva. Now catch it, if you can."

"If I can," I said, "you shall see." And I ran up to the larva and was just going to bite it when lo! it vanished. I had all I could do to keep myself on the pole for I had rushed on with such speed, that I came near falling down to the ground.

"Shall we now drag home the prey?" Fredrika Formica asked when she had waited a while.

I was very much embarrassed and came slowly back to her. "It is gone," I said.

"Oh, indeed," Fredrika Formica said, "but there are others to try at. Look over there."—

Then I tried again but each time when I was ready to catch hold of the larva it disappeared.

"Where in the world do they go to?" I asked Fredrika Formica, despairingly. Then she laughed and said:

"Stand still where you are and look where I go, and then you will see something;" and Fredrika Formica climbed higher up.

"Now watch," she said, and then I saw a little fly larva sink down in the air slowly and prettily.

“Fredrika Formica,” I cried, “It does not fall in the air, it does not fall as you and I do.”

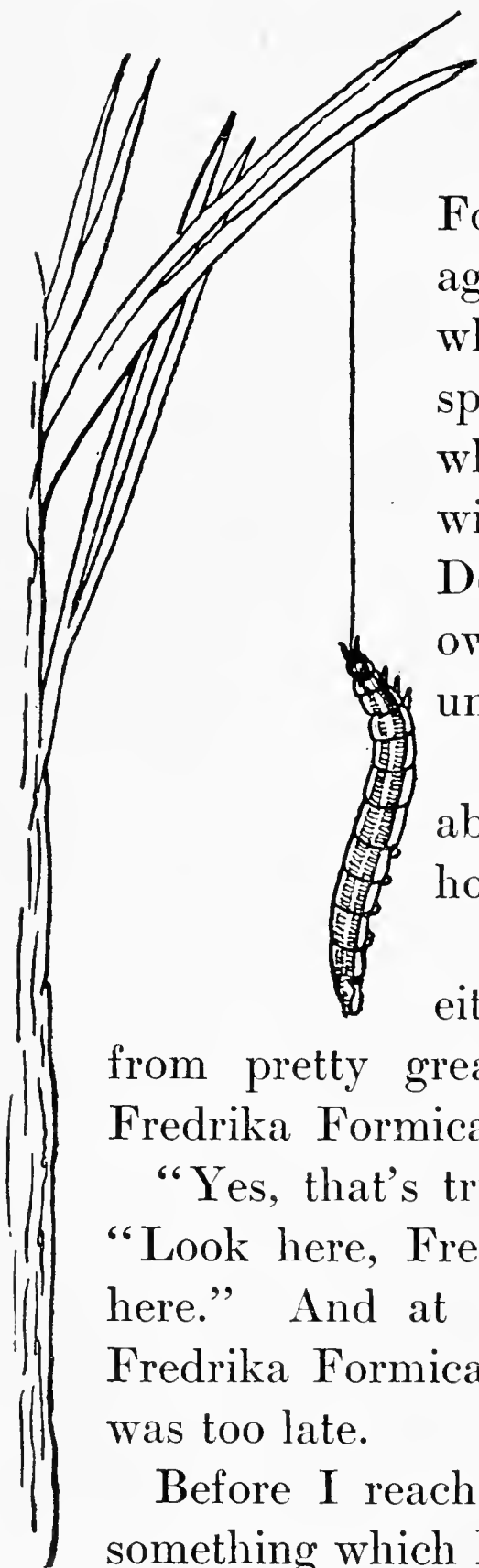
“Don’t you see,” Fredrika Formica said as she came down again, “it spins a thread for itself which it climbs on. The more it spins, the farther down it gets and when it wants to come up again, it winds up the thread into a little ball. Don’t you remember, Rufa, that our own children also can spin from their under lips?”

“But would it not be nice to be able to do that!” I cried. “See, how it swings and sways!”

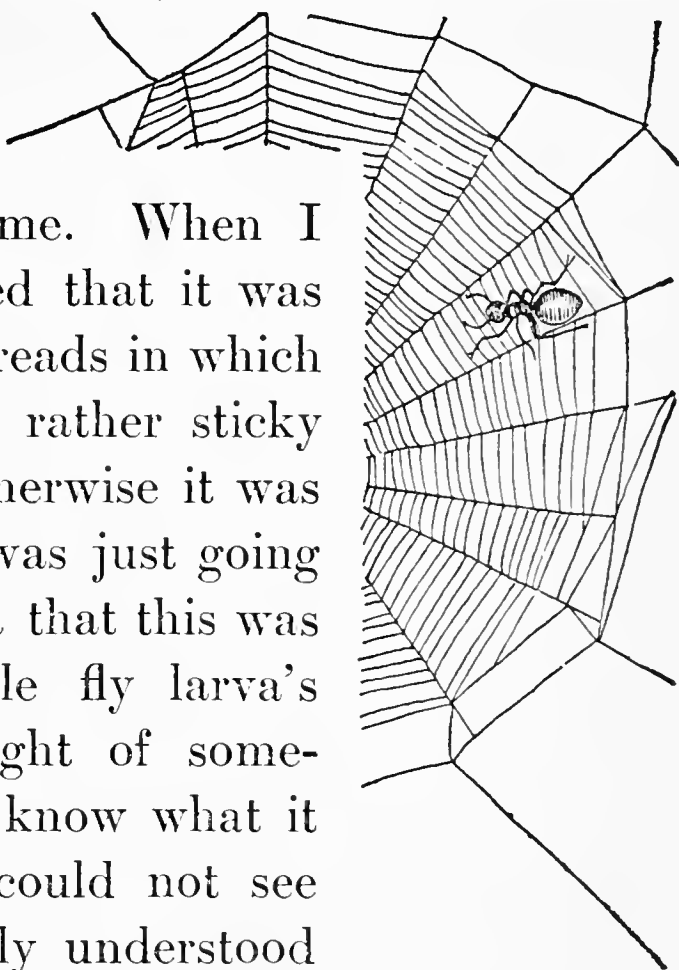
“Well, we aren’t so badly off either, for we can let ourselves drop from pretty great heights without being hurt,” Fredrika Formica said.

“Yes, that’s true, that is true,” I cried, eagerly. “Look here, Fredrika Formica, I will jump from here.” And at once I let go and fell. I heard Fredrika Formica call: “Rufa! Rufa!” but then it was too late.

Before I reached the ground I knocked against something which I quickly caught hold of, for I had



become dizzy and frightened in the fall. It received me very softly and rocked pleasantly under me. When I looked about me, I noticed that it was a fine cloth of spinning threads in which I lay. The threads were rather sticky and that felt nasty, but otherwise it was a nice web to rest in. I was just going to call to Fredrika Formica that this was quite as nice as the little fly larva's thread, when I caught sight of something terrible. I did not know what it was and in my terror I could not see what it looked like. I only understood that it was something awful. I began at once to spurt ant acid so that it rose like a mist around me. To get away quickly, I began to scratch and bite and tear at the web, which I did not find at all pleasant any longer and every time the monster moved, I squirted ant acid toward it. Then I noticed something remarkable. The black and white monster was also biting off threads in the web; it looked as if it wanted to get rid of me. As soon as I saw this, I grew brave again. "I do believe that thing is afraid of me," I thought, and I became quite calm. When we had both been working, biting and tearing for some time, the piece of web I lay



in came loose, and I fell to the earth. There stood Fredrika Formica and she was very anxious.

“How is it with you?” she asked, very much concerned.

“All right,” I said, “Do you know, the black and white one was afraid of me?”

“That was lucky for you, for let me tell you, Rufa, the black and white one won’t do to play with. You have acid, but she has poison. Didn’t you see the poison hooks? If you two had started to fight, I fear it would have gone ill with you. The black and white one was the cross-spider, *Epeira*, and if you knew her better, you would not speak so lightly.”

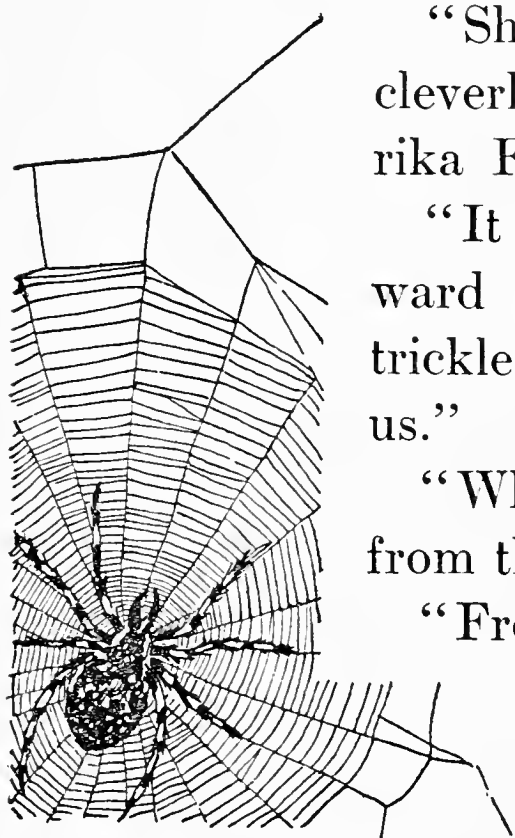
“From where does *Epeira* get her net?” I asked, when we had both been silent for a moment.

“She has made it herself, and very cleverly she weaves, I must say,” Fredrika Formica answered.

“It seems to me that it would be awkward to weave with threads that don’t trickle out from the under lip as with us.”

“Why, where do *Epeira*’s threads come from then?”

“From the tip of her hind body, would you believe it? Very uncomfortable it must be. But a fine spinner she is, as you can understand.



Even the dangerous Rufa got entangled in the net," Fredrika Formica said, and looked laughingly at me.

"I was frightened at first," I said shamefacedly, "but when I saw that she wanted to get rid of me—"

"Your courage rose, I understand," Fredrika Formica said and patted me with her mouth-threads.

"Where are we going now?" I asked.

"Now we are going home, but first we will climb this tree and milk some cows."

It was a pretty, white trunk we crawled up on, and lovely green flags waved in all directions. Suddenly Fredrika Formica stopped.

"Rufa," she said, "come here! Do you see something?"

"Yes, all sorts of things. I see leaves, twigs, Fredrika Formica, and—"

"But don't you see anything else, something strange?"

I tried to look and feel all about, but I did not see anything strange.

"Well, but Rufa, what is this then?" Fredrika Formica asked, stroking what she meant with her mouth-threads.

"It is a twig."

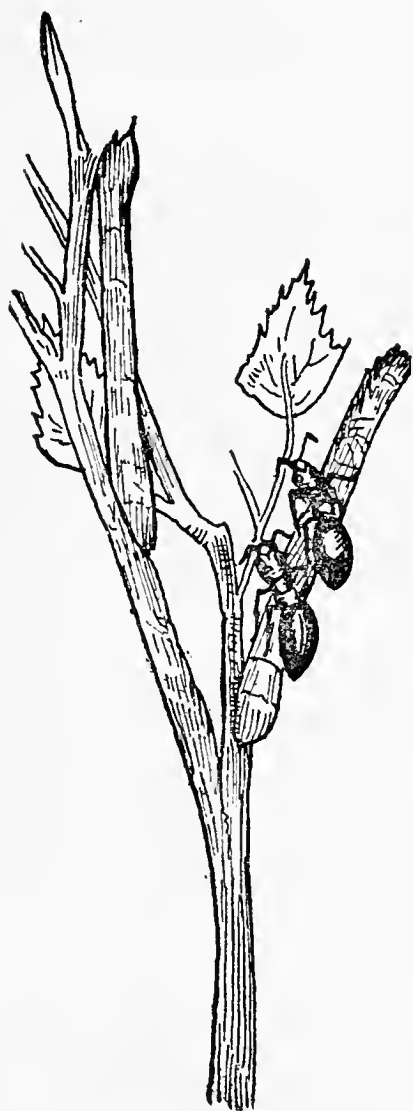
"Are you sure, Rufa?"

"Yes of course, I think it is a twig or at least something that pretends to be a twig."

"Pretends, yes, just pretends, that is what this twig does," Fredrika Formica said. "We will stay here awhile

and sit very quiet and still, and perhaps we shall see what this twig means to do.”

We waited a long time. Of course one shouldn't expect twigs to show off their crafts and tricks at once.



At last, however, this twig began to rock and sway, first slowly and carefully and then as if there were a terrible storm. I did not dare to say a word, where I sat beside Fredrika Formica, and though I felt that she trembled, from eagerness to hunt, I think, yet she sat quite still to let me look. Finally the twig bent like an arrow and began to walk. From an arrow it became a stick and from a stick it became an arrow again, and walk it did, and not badly either.

“Who is it, who is it, Fredrika Formica?” I whispered. But I had not time to get an answer before the twig we sat on gave a jerk so sudden and unexpected that both Fredrika Formica and myself made a long trip through the air before we landed on the ground under the tree.

“What is it?” I asked, quite dizzy.

Fredrika Formica shook herself, stretched her legs and waved her mouth-threads to find out if all was right.

“I am a little too old for such excursions,” she said then, but it turned out all right, just the same. And she burst out laughing.

“Why are you laughing, say, why are you laughing, Fredrika Formica?” I asked, and did not know what to think when I had no answer.

“Laugh too, Rufa, laugh too, that is the best we can do, when we’ve been so stupid. Old Fredrika Formica has allowed herself to be thoroughly fooled.” And again she laughed and I too, though as yet I understood nothing.

“Do you remember, Rufa,” Fredrika Formica said after a while, “how we were sitting before we made our somersault?”

“Yes,” I said, “we were sitting on a little twig and looking at—yes, who was it we were looking at?”

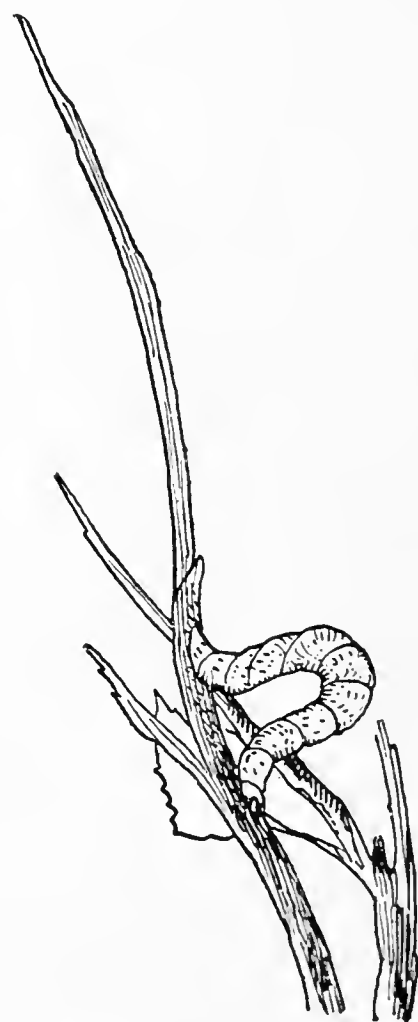
“It was the birch-measurer, Rufa, but why do you suppose we fell?”

“I suppose the wind shook the tree roughly.”

“No, Rufa, it was not the wind, think again.”

“You can’t mean —?”

“Yes, that is just what I do mean. We were sitting very meekly on one birch-measurer, while looking at



another, and our birch-measurer wanted to take a walk also, never thinking there was any danger, we had been sitting so still.” And Fredrika Formica again began to laugh.

“I think I have laughed enough to last me the year out,” she said, when quite exhausted we turned homeward.

CHAPTER VIII

WAR WITH THE RED ANTS

MANY days had passed since our last adventure when Fredrika Formica came up to me one day. She looked very much troubled.

“Do you know, Rufa,” she said, “it looks as if we should have war before this summer is over.”

“What is war?” I asked.

“It is to strike and bite, spurt poison, plunder and kill.”

“For shame, Fredrika Formica, how cruelly you speak!”

“But it is true, Rufa, such is war.”

“But you and I don’t want to do such things, do we?”

“No, of course, I don’t wish to do it, not now any way, but perhaps to-morrow I must do so,” Fredrika Formica said slowly and seriously.

“Against whom, then, are we going to war?” I asked.

“Have you not noticed who are crowding into our territories during the last days, who are milking our cows and wounding and killing many of our friends?”

“Yes, the red robbers, but they are so small,” I said.

“Small, yes, but the more dangerous, as you will soon find,” Fredrika Formica answered.

And I did find it out soon enough, for in a few days a war was on in all earnest. The little red ants came marching upon us and we had to go out and defend our stack, our children and ourselves. For two days the war lasted and we had to send more than once to the stack for fresh troops. I don't like to tell how things looked when it was all over. It was terrible. The awful red ones stopped the battle only on the condition that we should give them several great milk herds that we owned, and we had to let them take them. Then we hastened to carry home all our poor wounded, so that they might be well cared for and nursed in the stack, and the dead we carried to the dead. You see all our dead friends are put together in little earth holes.

"As once we crept up from the earth, so do we creep in again," Fredrika Formica said.

"Where has the sun been during these dreadful days?" I asked, when we were through carrying dead and wounded.

"I don't know," Fredrika Formica answered wearily; "I have seen nothing but red, red, red."

"I don't know either," I said, "but if it has not wept over us now, I don't know that it ever needs to do so."

CHAPTER IX

THE COMING OF WINTER

“SOON the long night comes, Rufa,” Fredrika Formica said once long after the war, “and do you know what I think we ought to do now?”

“No, what do you think?” I asked.

“Well, I think that we ought to go on a tour once more, and find out how other lives prepare themselves for the night. Do you want to, Rufa?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Then we shall get sweeter memories to fall asleep with,” Fredrika Formica added, as if to herself.

We had gone a long distance when I noticed that we were at a place I had never seen before.

“Where do you think of going, Fredrika Formica?”

“I had thought that for once we should go in the direction of the meadows and gardens. Look, here the woods end, and here stands one already with whom you may begin to talk. Come, we will run up to it.” And we ran quickly up the stem until we came to a wreath of houses, all of which had their doors wide open and looked very hospitable. I stood upon a large, green leaf under the wreath and looked into one of the houses. The upper

half of the door arched itself like a fine, white ceiling over the little maiden Pistil of the house and her four stamina brothers. Somewhat stooping they had to stand, however.



“Of what family are the little maid and her brothers?” I asked politely.

“Of the white-flowered nettle family,” all five answered. “And that is a good old family,” said the little maid.

“Early we rise and late we go to bed,” the two tall stamina cried.

“But then the storerooms are filled with the best products of the summer when night and the long sleep comes,” the short ones added.

“Well, what will happen to you when the night comes?” I asked.

“We, we wither, and our stalk and our leaves also wither, but down in the lively, warm earth our ground stem sleeps with all the treasures we gathered during the long summer. And when Spring comes our family rises again from the earth, young and fresh as the morning. That’s how it is, Rufa, but what do you suppose we have in the bottom of our house? Do you know?”

“No,” I said.

“There are little eggs, tiny eggs, which will become seeds that will sleep in the earth the whole long night and awake and grow in the spring.”

“Who helps the little ones in the spring, when they wake up?” I asked, remembering how we nursed and cared for our children when they crept out of the eggs.

“Helps them,” said the maid Pistil, looking reflective, “why, we’ve never thought of that!”

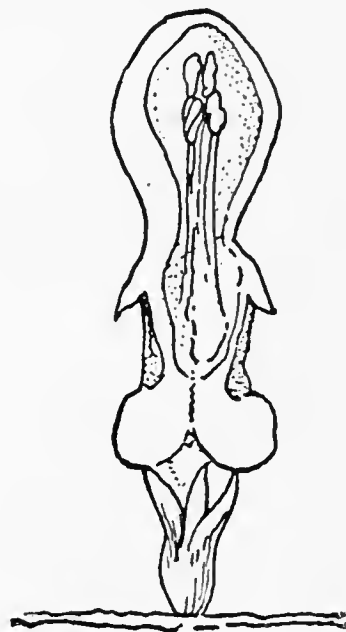
“Well, but, little sister, little sister,” then cried the stamina brothers, “they carry lunch with them.”

“Yes, yes,” said maiden Pistil, “they do so, but Rufa asked who helps them. But now I know, now I know, the earth folds them to her bosom, the rain creeps close to them, the air caresses them, and the sun warms them and beckons them up, higher up. That’s how it is,” said the little maiden Pistil, and nodded happily.

“Yes, that’s how it is, that’s how it is,” all the stamina cried in chorus.

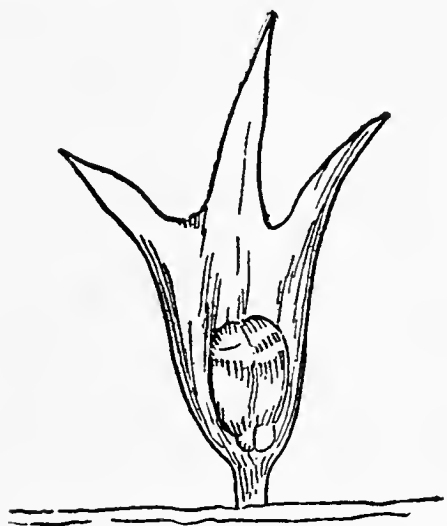
“Pretty good nurses,” I said, “but now we must go, we are in a hurry.”

“We too are very busy, very busy,” all five cried and nodded to us.



“Fancy,” I said to Fredrika Formica, while we ran away from there, “how diligently those five little ones work!”

“Those five little ones,” Fredrika Formica answered laughing, “are the youngest of the whole family. They like to chatter and talk and the older ones let them go on. They are all diligent, however, each one according to his ability.”



We sped on, until Fredrika Formica turned to me, and said:

“Hush, hush, Rufa, Epeira is in the neighborhood and looks fierce.”

I stole forward and looked in the direction Fredrika Formica pointed, and there stood my old acquaintance Epeira busying herself with something.

“What is she doing?” I whispered.

“She is preparing her little ones for the night,” Fredrika Formica whispered back. “Do you see, what a large, white sack she has woven? What do you suppose she has wrapped inside all those threads?”

“The babies,” I guessed.

“Precisely, Epeira’s eggs are sleeping there. Nice and soft and warm it is for them, and they are well hidden. They will wake up in the spring.”

“And where does old Epeira hide herself?” I asked.

“She withers away just like the five jolly little ones in the white-flowered nettle-house.”

“Shall we speak to her?”

“No, no, she is always dangerous, and now more than ever while she is hiding her eggs.”

We took a roundabout way and climbed up a tree. When we had run around there awhile, I said to Fredrika Formica,

“There is no flower-house here, and no little maid Pistil to talk to.”

“No,” Fredrika Formica said, “but you might sometimes talk with the older ones.”

“Yes, indeed, if they would only pay attention to me, but several have flown away when I have come up to them. I will try once more,” I said, and I went up to a large, yellowish-green leaf.

“How do you do?” I said.

It fluttered and rustled in answer.

“Soon the summer is over,” I said.

“So it is, so it is,” the leaf sighed.

I felt so sorry for the old leaf, I did not know what to say.

“Why do you fly away from your branches?” I asked at last.

“We have finished our work, and are old and tired,” the leaves answered.



“Is that why you sigh and are sorry?” I whispered.

“I am not sorry, little Rufa, I am only old and tired, and then it sounds just as if one moaned at every puff of wind. No, we are not unhappy, we old ones, if we only have time to get everything ready before the night comes.”

“What is it that must be ready?”

“Food for the young ones who will awake next spring.”

“Where are they during the long night?”

“They are asleep in their houses which we have built for them,” the leaf answered. “Do you see this little brown knob by my stem? That is my little one’s winter cradle. There are many such cradles on this branch and some are larger

and rounder than the others.”

“Why is that, then?” I asked curiously.

“Think, Rufa,” Fredrika Formica said, who was standing by me, “now think how it is with our own children.”

“The larva babies?” I answered wondering.

“Yes, the larva babies, when they have fallen asleep.”

“The pupæ,” I said, trying to think. “Yes, our royal children have larger cradles than the others.” “Are those



then your royal children that live in the bigger houses?" I asked eagerly.

"Just so, just so, our royal children they are, the stamina and pistils," the leaf answered.

"And those in the other houses are like Fredrika Formica and myself?"

"Yes," the leaf said, "if you, in your home, take care of the food and the cleaning and airing and much else besides, as we green ones do here, for little green ones are sleeping in my cradle."

"Yes, we are just like that," I cried nodding.

"They are sleeping so sweetly here," the leaf said, bending many times over the little brown knob, "and all through the long winter they sleep, but in the spring the wall bursts and they then creep out, small, pale, green and furry, so as to keep warm. Long before them, the eager pistils and stamina have burst their walls and come out like fine, white silk tassels."

"But how do they dare to come out so early? Is it not very cold in the night?"

"They are so eager and impatient, and if only the sun shines on their wall for ever so short a time, they wake up and begin to call, one after the other: 'We have overslept, we have overslept. It must be spring long ago.'"

"They stretch themselves and they say that it is very



hot and crowded and they all want to look out, just a little wee bit, through a tiny wee crack, just to see if spring is ready yet. They all stretch and all look out, and then the wall breaks and there they stand.

“‘Do you see any spring?’

“‘No, but do you see any?’ they ask each other.

“‘We have come too early,’ says one at last. ‘This must be the white winter.’

“‘It is nice that we have our soft silk fur coats,’ another one says. ‘We will keep close together and we will be all right,’ says a third. And so they stand huddled close together in their white winter fur coats and await the spring. I have never seen them, but from what I have heard I understand that they must be the softest and loveliest of all soft and lovely things. There are only little maiden Pistils in each silk tassel, or only stamina. Our tree is a maiden tree.”

At that moment a sudden breeze came tearing and pulling at the old leaf until I thought it would be torn off, but it held on.

“I am not yet ready,” it said, when the breeze had grown calmer. “I still have some good food juice which must be sent to the buds. Those are the little ones. Afterward the wind may take me.”

“Won’t there be a bad wound when you are torn off?” I asked.

“No,” it answered smiling a little, “don’t you think

we have thought of that? Why, then the precious life juice would flow away. No, before I am ready to fall, I must have built a wall between the branch and myself. I am soon ready and then I shall fall to the ground, and a small scar on the branch is the only thing that shows my old place.”

When we left the tree and turned homeward, I said,

“They all wish to get to the earth. There they want to sleep and there they want to wither. **It** will be very nice to creep into it and sleep through the long night.”

“That’s what I think too,” Fredrika Formica said.

“But do you know, I should very much like to be awake when Spring comes, whom they are all talking about.”

Fredrika Formica laughed.

“Silk tassel,” she said, “where is your fur?”

I laughed embarrassed.

“Don’t be anxious, dear little Rufa, we will awake with the spring,” she said later, and nodded; “but tell me, Rufa, how do you like your first summer?”

“Fredrika Formica, Fredrika Formica,” I said, stroking her with my mouth-threads, “I am so glad of my lovely long summer day.”

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